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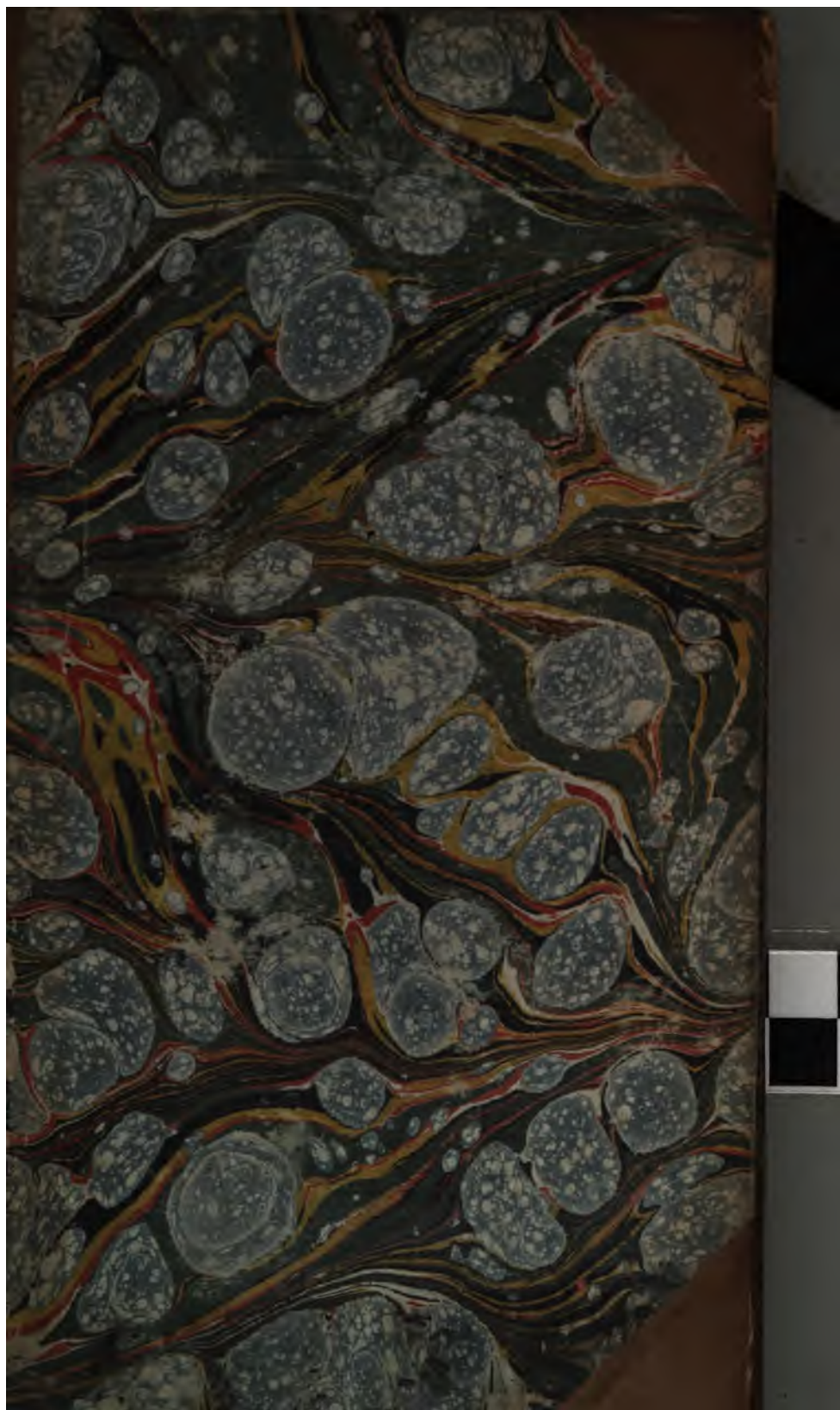
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SPIRIT AND CONSTITUTION

OF

THE CHURCH;

IN THEIR RELATION TO THE GENERAL WELFARE
OF THE STATE.

BY THE REV. CHARLES MACKIE, M.A.,
OF QUARLEY, HANTS, AND DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO HIS ROYAL
HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF CLARENCE.

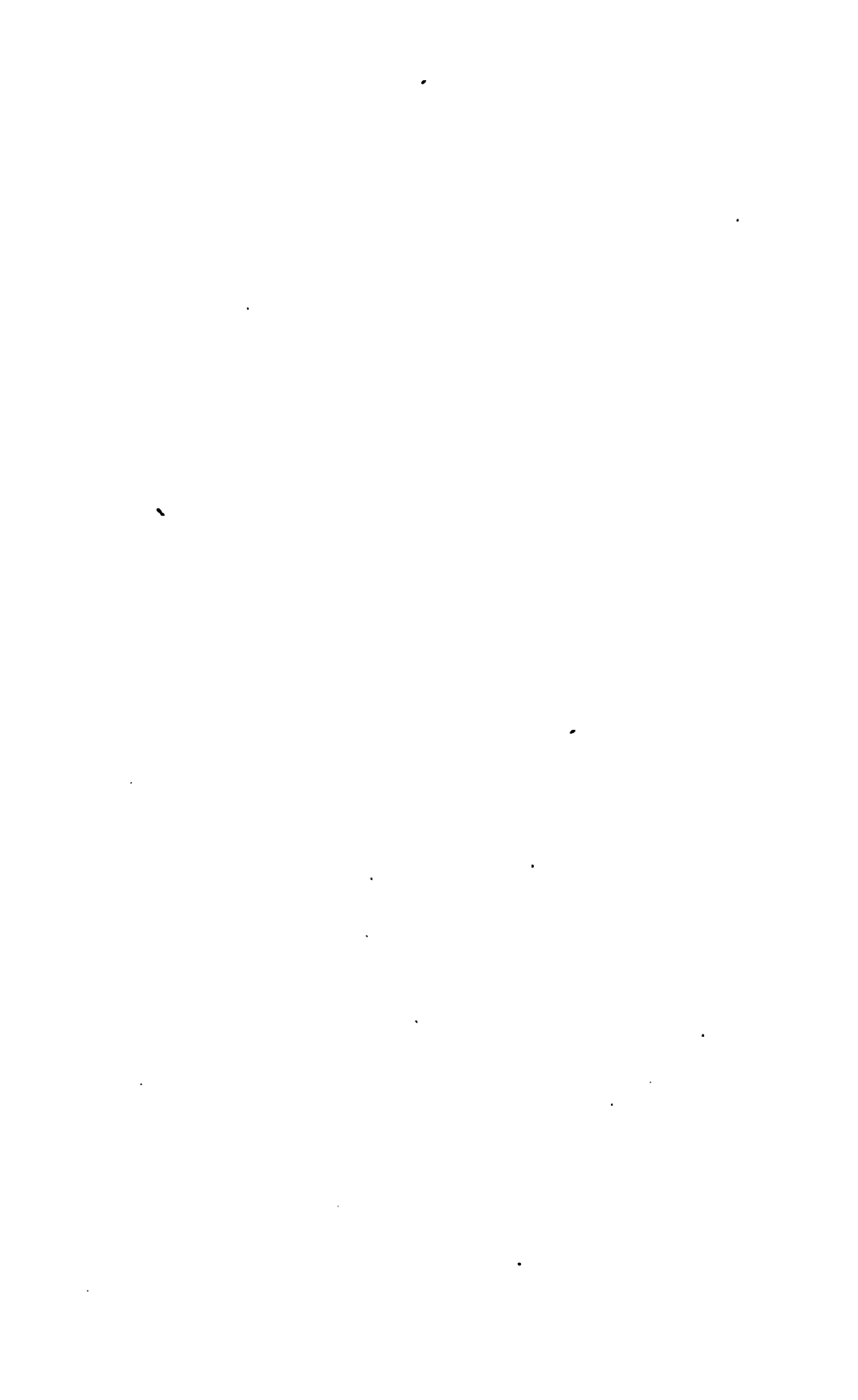
LONDON:

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CCXXVII.







THE
SPIRIT AND CONSTITUTION
OF
THE CHURCH.



should be discovered, over which, as pious children, they would wish to throw a veil.

To all, who thus look with dutiful attachment to the Church, even while they are without a just appreciation of her merits, nothing can be unacceptable which goes to prove, that there is not a charge that has been brought against her for which they are required to look for palliation. To such it must give pleasure to perceive, that on a close examination, that is seen to be a beauty, which, imperfectly considered, had appeared to be a blemish. To those who are thus situated it must be satisfactory to know, that what has been called her weakness, is in truth her strength ; that she is entitled even to demand their admiration, in the points where they had feared that an apology might be due.

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ERRATA.

Page	Line	
141,	8,	<i>for rest read rests</i>
151,	23,	<i>for stability of the read stability of her</i>
125,	17,	<i>for in justice be read in justice to be</i>
225,	6,	<i>for abide as read abide us</i>
297,	21,	<i>for that decided read a decided</i>
304,	23,	<i>for wherevert here read wherever there</i>

THE
SPIRIT AND CONSTITUTION
OF
THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE VIEWS OF CHRISTIANITY IN REGARD TO THE
GRADATIONS AND DISTINCTIONS OF SOCIETY.

WITH various principles implanted in our nature subjecting us to wants for which they prompt us to obtain supply, surrounded with the objects by which they are severally and appropriately addressed, it is an obvious inference that whatever be the ulterior aim of our existence, there are pursuits, there are employments, having an immediate reference to the present life, which we are not merely permitted, but constrained, to follow.

But the supply of the materials which our exigencies demand, however liberally provided on the whole, is not always, nor equally, within our reach. To reason, therefore, it appears a further inference, as obvious as it is just, that we

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304,	23,	<i>for</i> wherevert here <i>read</i> wherever there

wardly assumes, while she sanctions our endeavours to retain them when acquired, there are parts of Revelation which seem to militate against the justness of these views. There are some among her precepts, by which, if intended to be literally obeyed, the deductions of our reason are completely overthrown.

“Labour not” says our Saviour “for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life*.” “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also†.”

It is evident that by endeavouring to act upon commandments of this nature, we must subvert the constitution of society, such as we have always found it to exist. We must do away the specific differences by which its members are distinguished from each other. But if these pre-

* John vi. 27.

† Matt. vi. 19—21.

cepts and prohibitions lay us under an imperative obligation to pursue the conduct which they seem to make incumbent, neither is it, apparently, in any of the consequences to which they lead, that the shadow of a pretext for disobedience can be found. As the one could not be sanctioned without leading to the other, so far seems Revelation to be consistent with herself, that not contented with merely interdicting the pursuit of wealth, she appears to contemplate and follow out the consequences to their full extent. She seems openly and pointedly to abrogate the distinctions to which the pursuit of it must inevitably give birth.

“Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*. Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will

* Matt. xix. 23, 24.

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are acting conformably with the will of our Creator, when we employ the powers and opportunities we possess, in laying up provision of the means by which we may at all times be enabled to minister to our enjoyment, while we relieve our wants. But in the attainment of this object to which all are prompted, all cannot equally ensure success,—all have not the same activity of mind,—all are not equal in corporeal strength,—nor have all alike the opportunities of exertion. Hence, apparently, the natural, the necessary origin of those distinctions, which have been found in every country, which have been found in every age, and, with various characteristics of their several gradations, in leaving or approaching the extremities of either, which are all of them comprehended under the general denomination of high and low, of rich and poor, of those who are abundantly provided for the wants of life, of those who have obtained a scantier provision.

Yet while reason thus approves of at least a portion of our time and talents being devoted to the acquirement of the objects which are to constitute our wealth, whatever be the form it out-

wardly assumes, while she sanctions our endeavours to retain them when acquired, there are parts of Revelation which seem to militate against the justness of these views. There are some among her precepts, by which, if intended to be literally obeyed, the deductions of our reason are completely overthrown.

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* John vi. 27.

† Matt. vi. 19—21.

with theirs, while it is solely in the spirit of their obligation that these extend to others.

Whenever, therefore, there are portions of the Scripture, apparently involving consequences directly at variance with the inductions of our reason, before we can determine in what respect they were intended to exert an influence on ourselves or others, it is our duty to weigh well the language, and the form in which they are expressed; the circumstances of the individuals through whom they were delivered; the circumstances of those to whom they were addressed; the more immediate context; and to view the whole in strict connexion with the general tenour of her precepts and her doctrines.

When to the case in question we apply this rule, when we have thereby separated that which was of local, from that which is of universal use, and what was of temporary, from what is plainly of perpetual obligation, in regard to those portions of the Scriptures, as to which the views of Revelation have been so frequently misunderstood, it will be found that she is perfectly at one with reason.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE CAUSES WHICH COMBINED TO GIVE CHRISTIANITY
THE APPEARANCE OF SEEKING TO REDUCE HER FOLLOWERS
TO AN EQUALITY AS TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES
OF EXTERNAL FORTUNE.

ON examining how far there might be temporary or local causes, explaining and limiting the passages to which we have alluded, we see that in the very foundation of the plan for the salvation of our race, through the vicarious sufferings of the Son of God, there is implied a moral impossibility that the opulent or powerful could be admitted as his personal and immediate coadjutors.

It was absolutely required for the accomplishment of that plan, that his should be a kingdom not of this world ; to borrow an expression from the prophet, that there should be in him no form nor comeliness that he might be desired. It was requisite that he should not exercise a directing influence, a personal control, over the private

fortunes, or over the public conduct of mankind. According to his own expression, he was not to be a judge, nor a divider over them. On the principle, that in the government of God, there can be no unnecessary suspension of its general laws, supernatural agency is never introduced, where natural is adequate to the end in view.

But to bring about these ends, as connected with the expiatory sufferings of Jesus, instruments existed in those unprincipled and ambitious men, who, in acting conformably with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, were, at the same time, following the unbiassed impulse of their evil passions. Had our Saviour, however, permitted himself to be followed by the opulent in the character of disciples, he must have become the leader of a civil party in the state. This indication of approaching earthly greatness, joined to the attributes of moral grandeur, which were, in all respects, so eminently his, coinciding with their expectations of a temporal deliverance, must, to the body of the Jews, have given so powerful an attraction to his cause, as utterly to have changed the aspect of his life. For similar

reasons, would it have affected the circumstances and manner of his death. It would have made it requisite, either that by miraculous interposition, otherwise unnecessary, he should again be placed in that defenceless state, which might leave him obnoxious to the sufferings he was at last to undergo, or if made to fall under the ascendancy of his enemies, gained according to the ordinary course of human things, this identification of his interests with those of rich and powerful partisans, would have rendered it a matter of indispensable necessity that civil commotions should precede his death.

In the nature also of the evidence, on which, as adapted to the circumstances of human nature, Revelation was to rest, we find another reason for perceiving that if our Saviour's personal assistants in the propagation of the Gospel should be chosen from the number of the rich, it was impossible they could be permitted to continue in that class. From the nature of those circumstances, it was necessary for the reception of its truths, when first promulgated after its author's death, that the Gospel should be indebted chiefly

to the miracles he wrought; attested by witnesses whose evidence, credible in itself, was to be rendered still more satisfactory to those whom they addressed, by the numerous miracles which they themselves performed. But with reference to the time when this supernatural attestation was to cease, the evidence chiefly coming in its room, was to be the wideness of its first reception in opposition to the passions and the prejudices by which it was opposed, the magnitude of its results in changing the opinions and the habits of mankind. To give this evidence its full effect, it was requisite that nothing but the existence of these miracles might be able to account for the extent of these results. It was required that the immediate agents of the change should stand apart from everything that could give to them the semblance of support from human means, or afford the shadow of a reason for asserting that their success might be attributed to secondary causes.—Without wealth to bribe, without power to force compliance with their wishes, while their tenets were adopted in opposition to the efforts of those who were possessed of both,

according to the strong expression of the apostle, it was thus to be made apparent to the world, that although the treasure was in earthen vessels, the power and excellency of the working were of God.

When we call to mind these facts, we can easily account, consistently with the wisdom and the justice of the Almighty, for the temporary exclusion of the rich, as such, from the number of the ministers and assistants of our Lord. We can now perceive why they were commanded to sell all that they had and give to the poor before they were allowed to follow him. But although no trivial evil in itself, it was comparatively little that in following him they gave up the comforts which depended on their wealth. Along with poverty and its attendant hardships, came the voluntary abandonment of their families and friends. To the pain, which was implied in the violence thus offered to the habits and the feelings they had previously indulged, was to be joined the unrelenting persecution of their rulers, for supporting a Messiah coming under a character so different from the one in which their hopes

prefigured his appearance. When with these concomitants and consequences of adhering to his cause, we also take into our view, that they were evils to be suffered in behalf of one, the nature of whose claims, as well as the evidences by which they are supported, were only as yet but partially disclosed, we see that there was here a trial of their faith, we may almost say immeasurably severe. When we find that they were applied to one whose firmness was unable to withstand this test, then without attaching anything that is harsh or invidious to our Saviour's words, we can readily perceive, how true it was that a rich man, at that peculiar station of its progress, could hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The knowledge of the circumstances which explain to us the origin of this expression, and the limited sense in which it must be taken, affords an explanation equally available, of a variety of others, which, taken singly or in connexion, have been the cause of much misapprehension of the views of Revelation.

The same reference to the circumstances of those of whom he spoke, explains to us the

sense in which we are to take the passages where the rich and poor seem often to be so harshly and invidiously contrasted. It was in lifting up his eyes on his disciples that our Saviour said, Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God, on those who for his sake had consented to become or had continued poor, at a time when it implied a voluntary subjection to such complicated evils. Directly opposed to these, the rich, to whom a woe is afterwards denounced as having already met their consolation, were evidently those who had employed the influence of wealth in opposition to the Gospel, and who persecuted its followers with malignant zeal*.

Whatever, therefore, may appear to be their tendency on slight consideration, from a knowledge of the circumstances under which they were delivered, and modified, and limited, as they almost ever are, by something in the remote or more immediate context, it is evident that there is nothing in such expressions from which it may be inferred that Christianity, in the ordinary course of human things, interferes with the natural incli-

nation of mankind to secure themselves from the evils incident to their being left without a provision for the wants of life. There is nothing in these expressions, which, when rightly understood, interferes with those relations which naturally arise from such an inclination.

But if we look to her further for some positive authority to justify completely the conclusions of our reason, we have only to consult the record of her dictates to meet their confirmation to our utmost wish. It is true, that during the whole of the period through which that record is extended, so far as the adherents of Christianity were concerned, the order of society was disjointed and disturbed. In all the countries where she was then received, they were the objects of suspicion, and in many of them were actually exposed to persecution. Throughout the whole canon, therefore, of the New Testament Scriptures, there are occasionally peculiarities of circumstance arising from this and other causes, for which allowance must be made in determining the general scope of Revelation. But in the portion which relates to the passing of the Gospel

beyond the limits of Judea, in the progress it was making towards general diffusion, periods are occasionally found in which the Church had rest. In this portion of the Scriptures, therefore, we find the principles of the Christian system receiving that gradual, but decided, explanation which was to shew their tendency and bearing both upon public and upon private life, when it should meet with a more unlimited extension, and in the calmer and more ordinary current of affairs. As might be looked for in a case where there was a danger of its tendency being mistaken in so material a point as this, among the explanations which it then received, was the distinct and pointed disavowal of its wish to interfere with the great law of nature, which makes human industry and human foresight the medium of security against human wants. This is an explanation which is even accompanied with the annunciation of that penalty, by which, in the common course of providence, that law had been enforced, that if any man will not work, so neither should he eat*.

* 2 Thess. iii. 10.

But when we find not only that she does not repeal, but that she also as it were re-enacts, the law by which we are not merely suffered but constrained to turn our attention to those objects on the pursuit of which we are dependant for the supply of what is requisite to meet our wants, we might, were it necessary, be content with this as an equally authoritative sanction of the separations into which society has always shown a tendency to run. But with this implied acknowledgment it is by no means necessary that we should remain contented. It is true that independent of those expressions by which these distinctions, in reference to her followers, may appear to be abolished, but of which, as applicable to the question, we have already obviated the force, there are otherwise occasions when she studiously disclaims or keeps them out of view. When she speaks to us of the relations in which we stand to our Creator, the space which separates man from man, is lost in that immeasurable distance by which all are separated from the God that made them. When she speaks of the relation in which we stand to our Redeemer,

the relative advantages of earthly fortune shrink into insignificance, or wholly disappear beside the privileges which as Christians are common to the whole. She then speaks to us abstractedly from all considerations of time, or place, or quality, or sex. In the language of her apostle, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus *." That on such occasions they should be overlooked or studiously disclaimed, affords us the strongest reasons to expect that there are others on which these distinctions shall be duly recognised. Accordingly we find that when she accompanies us out into the world, that she may teach us how we are to lay hold on the hope that is set before us in the Gospel, there is not one relation that is either formed by nature, or approved by reason, which Christianity has not enumerated and sought to strengthen. Then she addresses us not as Christians merely, but either openly by name, or virtually by the inculcation of peculiar duties, as Christian husbands and as Christian wives, as Christian parents and as

* Gal. iii. 28.

Christian children, as Christian masters and as Christian servants, as Christian rulers and as Christian subjects*.

But of these relations which she has thus enumerated not only as subsisting betwixt man and man, but sanctioned as subsisting betwixt the followers of Christ, there are none which Revelation has so constantly in her eye, so often on her lips, on which she so generally grounds her reasonings, by which her doctrines are so frequently illustrated, as the relations which are founded in the difference of wealth, as it necessarily leads to difference of rank. Expressed, or understood, in all their various ramifications, as they either constitute or modify our duties, these relations may be traced through every page of Scripture, which has more immediately a reference to the conduct of human life, until we find them entering the balance, as connected either with the deficient or preponderating weight, which is to fix the eternal destiny of man.

In that striking representation of the scene which shall attend the consummation of all earthly

* Ephes. chap. v. and vi. Rom. xiii. &c.

things, we find the description, as to the sublimest of its features, borrowed from the attributes of regal state. There we also see the gradation of their ranks, the difference of their duties, clearly recognised, while they are fully sanctioned in finding those who, as contradistinguished from the others, are denominated the least among the brethren of the Son of man. Among them, who, as his faithful followers, are called to be inheritors of the blessings of his kingdom, we find not those alone who have reached them through the difficulties and evils of the world, but also those who, being themselves exempted from its severer trials, have employed the influence of their wealth and station, in endeavouring to mitigate the sufferings of others. There we find assembled not merely the hungry and the stranger, the naked, the prisoner and the sick and helpless, but those who have fed the hungry, who have sheltered the houseless, who have clothed the naked, who have relieved the sick, and who have succoured the oppressed*.

From every view, therefore, which can be taken

* Matt. xxv.

of them, whether it be the aspect they exhibit, when seen by the light of unassisted reason, or from the importance which they occupy in the eye of Revelation, it follows, that to speak of its gradations, as merely the artificial distinctions of society, is a language that is unwarrantable, is an abuse of terms. The marks which note the separations, may be indeed conventional or adventitious in their nature. The several attributes of external fortune, in which their relative superiority consists, may be contingent, and affected by accidental causes; but the divisions which they indicate, distinguished as they must be by some outward mark, are essentially, inseparably characteristic of our race. In the very earliest stages of society, it may often be with difficulty that we are able to recognise them, not from their being there of problematical existence, but from our being accustomed to associate them with certain names, to look for them only under certain forms. But as long as men differ in physical or intellectual capacity, or in those external circumstances which combine with these in giving more or less facility to the acquirement of the

natural objects of desire, as long as they differ in the moral habits which lead them to be provident or negligent of what they have obtained, so long must there be classes and separations in society, of which the original, although not always the most prominent distinction, is the difference of the power of ministering to the wants, and thus contributing to the good of others. He who is master of the means of their subsistence, must also, in some measure, be master of the actions of his fellow men. "The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender*."

We find, accordingly, that whatever be the difficulty with which we have to trace them in its earlier stages, the whole of past experience, the whole of present observation, everything which by possibility may bear upon the subject, unite to prove that society cannot pass beyond a certain limit in its progress, without passing visibly and decidedly into such an order and disposition of its parts. Authenticated history through the whole of its details, the inference from those which relate to ancient times, being decidedly

* Prov. xxii. 7.

supported by its recent tenour, goes equally to prove that whenever society has advanced beyond a certain point, all attempts to counteract this tendency, and to restrain those separations, and to keep mankind upon anything approaching to a common level, is only seeking to prevent our nature from coming out into its proper shape, from rising to its just and natural proportions. It is, therefore, that such attempts have always ended in a similar result, in its several parts returning to their original and relative position, but, that preceded by convulsions which have shaken society to its very base, demonstrating, unequivocally, that when subjected to these restraints, it laboured under a forced, unnatural compression. Universal, therefore, in extent, rising necessarily out of instincts which lie the deepest among the principles of our nature, throughout acknowledged and approved by Revelation, it may be laid down as a position which is irrefragably established, that the gradations of society, are to be considered as the work, and to be revered as stamp with the authority, of God.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE LIGHT IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION
REGARDS THE ENJOYMENTS OF THE PRESENT LIFE.

FOR attempting to demonstrate what seems so nearly approaching a self-evident proposition, as that the distinctions of society, in the separation of its ranks, come, necessarily, from the principles of our nature, taken in relation to its external circumstances, we must again be suffered to adduce in palliation, the necessity, for the clearness of our future reasonings, of obviating some of the mistaken views with which the subject has so often been connected. We refer not merely to the few by whom this origin may be openly denied. Our reference is chiefly to the many who, nominally acknowledging their origin to be such, maintain opinions inconsistent with its truth.

Of the different questions of which this conclusion, with the several steps employed for its

attainment, may be considered as explanatory, if not decisive, there is one of which the determination is essential for completing the foundation that supports the accuracy of our future views.

The question to which our previous reasoning is so applicable for solution, and as to which we are persuaded that the views of Revelation have been greatly misconceived, is how far, as individuals, we are permitted to advance in reaping the enjoyments of the present world, without forfeiting the happiness of a future state.

The wants which have a reference to the mere support of animal existence, and even those on which what is generally termed our comfort is depending, are comparatively as few in number as they are limited in extent. By such as have been placed in favourable circumstances, they may, with facility, be met by a provision which surpasses what is required for individual supply.

Immediately, however, on the attainment of this abundance, a fastidiousness of mind is found to supervene. Rejecting the supplies with which he is familiar, at least, in their simple and un-

altered state, man feels himself invariably inspired with the desire to meet the wants which he has previously experienced, either by materials that are entirely new, or by combining the old into another form. Simultaneously with this desire to vary the means of satisfying the wants with which he has been hitherto familiar, there spring up others of a different nature, of which he seems not to be susceptible before. If at all anterior in their origin to the period we have fixed, the principles of his nature, from which these wants arise, then meet with objects by which they are so decidedly addressed, and so decidedly awakened, that they may, with propriety, be considered as before unknown.

In this increasing susceptibility of wants, equivalent with an increasing susceptibility of enjoyments, of which there are some of a corporeal, some of an intellectual, and some of a nature which partakes of both, we have the origin of those sciences, those arts, those habits, and those tastes, which under different forms are the accompaniments of civilization, if they go not far to constitute its essence. In the time at which

this increasing susceptibility of enjoyment takes its rise, in its continuing to increase with the increase of the objects which it calls forth to meet it, would reason lead us to perceive an arrangement of the Deity as benevolent as wise. On the one hand, it is evident that this is an arrangement which equalizes the happiness in equalizing the distribution of the necessities of life. It obviates the evils that would otherwise arise from the striking inequality with which the capacity of acquiring them is distributed by nature. None, comparatively, whatever be their natural deficiencies, can be left dependant on the casual bounty or caprice of others; while this arrangement is continually opening channels through some of which their labour may be desirable, as an equivalent for the aid which they themselves require. On the other hand it goes directly to increase the quantity of human happiness by the variety of means which it affords for satisfying the wants with which it finds mankind beset, as well as those which this arrangement has itself created. Above all does it appear calculated to exert a favourable influence on human

life, by increasing and perpetuating that excitement and activity, as well of the corporeal as of the mental powers, in which consists the pleasure of existence, more than in the fruition of its positive enjoyments.

Looking to this aspect of the advantages which society at large is capable of deriving from this increasing susceptibility of human wants, and from the multiplied pursuits to which it necessarily leads, to the eye of reason, there would appear no limit to the search, the accumulation and the application of the means by which those wants may be relieved ; in other words, no limit to the pursuit and the fruition of all temporal enjoyments, short of their ceasing to be thus advantageous to ourselves or others, or of their trenching upon moral or religious duty.

In this, however, reason also comes to a conclusion which by many is considered to be directly in opposition to the views of Revelation. In accordance with what they represent to be the will of God as it is made known by Christianity to man, both as to number and extent, many would so limit the enjoyments of the present world, of which we may with innocence partake, as to

leave them no end to serve in the economy of life, excepting in so far as they may prove an exercise of self-denial in rejecting such of them as come within our reach. Christianity if not in words, in principle at least, is represented as leaving to sincere believers no employment for the means which are capable of being directed to the purchasing of temporal enjoyment, excepting that which would consist in making the active and the strong the servants and the agents of the indolent or the weak. To state it even in the most favourable terms, they represent the Gospel as leaving no employment for the accumulated product of individual prudence and individual labour, except that end which constitutes the rich the stewards of the poor in ministering supply to their more urgent wants.

To the causes we have previously enumerated as giving Christianity the appearance, but the appearance only, of excluding from her view the distinctions which depend on inequality of wealth, we are also undoubtedly, in a measure, to ascribe her seeming proscription of the enjoyments which it brings.

At a time when the profession of Christianity

was necessarily attended with so many present and prospective evils, whether it actually induced the sacrifice of previous competence, or only aggravated the usual hardships of a humbler lot, to all her professed adherents there was a strong temptation to desert her cause, and leaving a dangerous and uncertain course, to resume the occupations, and to return again to the security and comfort of a private life. To obviate the force of this temptation, and to weaken those unfavourable impressions, which being permitted to remain unchecked, must greatly have obstructed the foundation of the Gospel, our Saviour expressed the reasonableness of their being free from all anxiety as to their future exigences, in language of so strong and forcible a nature, that it might well be deemed impossible it could ever be forgotten. From this was a trust in providence, in many instances, inculcated in terms which seemed not only to supersede their own exertions, but to argue that as to the present world the future with its hopes, its wishes, and its fears, was not even to become an object of their thoughts. Hence also the peculiar manner in which the temporal

advantages to which their circumstances might have led them to attach too high a value, are brought forward and contrasted with the spiritual blessings, which, from the multiplicity of evils that were attendant on their pursuit, it was natural to expect they should be induced to under-rate. That it might be deeply and lastingly impressed upon their minds, that what was the object of their distant hopes was deserving of the sacrifices which were to constitute its price, the exhortations given to look chiefly to the happiness of a future state were couched in terms which seemed to strip all temporal advantages not merely of relative but of absolute importance.

It is true that even at an after period, and when the circumstances of her followers were considerably changed, we find her still apparently inimical to that direction of their pecuniary resources which was not turned to the supply of their most simple wants, as well as to the habits which necessarily attend a different application. So rigidly at times did these still appear to be proscribed by her, that we find her extending her displeasure through the medium of her apostles,

to personal ornaments and modes of dress*. These as enumerated and condemned by them independent of their connexion with the tastes and habits, which, in giving excitement and direction to the industry of man, so beneficially influence the interests of society, we should naturally conceive might, in themselves, be held indulgences of a harmless and indifferent kind. If, therefore, prohibited as sinful in their nature, within the circle of enjoyments which nature and reason seem to lay open to pursuit, excepting what arise from the relief of the bare necessities of life, there seem scarcely any of which we may with innocence partake. But that these expressions are not to be construed into general prohibitions and restrictions, or to be considered as implying that the tastes and habits against which they were directed are to be deemed of an absolutely sinful nature, will be evident if we try them by that test which may be found in the knowledge of the circumstances under which they were denounced.

Even during the calmest porj

* 1 Tim. ii. 9.

through which the canon of the New Testament brings down the history of the Church, it is to be kept in view that they were calm, only if compared with those when the storm of persecution raged against the Christians with unmitigated fury.

Objects alike of public jealousy and of private hatred, there were, during the calmest of those periods, many who had been ruined in their fortunes, or were deprived of the opportunity of gaining a subsistence by their own exertions. There were many who had to lament the loss of those on whom they were depending for support, removed by exile, by imprisonment, by death. While the evils which one day brought to some, the next might bring to all, we cannot but perceive, that in a degree far beyond what is incumbent in the ordinary circumstances of society, the Christians of those times were thrown upon the sympathy and kindness of each other. When we thus advert to the situation in which they individually stood, when we advert to that in which they stood to those with whom they were connected by ties of so close and so peculiar a de-

scription, we can easily perceive a reasonable ground for the indignation of the apostles being attracted by what might otherwise be deemed unworthy of their notice. Under those peculiar circumstances, the attention of the converts being directed towards the ornaments of dress or other objects of a similar description, indicated a defect of Christian principle, absorbing as it did, what might immediately be required for the support of their religion, in supporting the existence of its individual adherents. Under the circumstances stated, it was indicative of the same hardness of heart and levity of mind, which in the ordinary course of human things should give to selfish ends, to personal indulgence, what alone could enable us to relieve the sufferings of those who had the strongest claim upon our aid. But what called forth the reprehension of the apostles, in such points as these, was evidently not an absolute inconsistency with Christian principle or with Christian feeling, but merely an incongruity as to time and place. In every other instance where there is in Scripture a seeming hostility to the tastes and habits in which is implied the ap-

plication of the higher attributes of wealth to personal gratification, there will be found some qualifying circumstance which limits that hostility only to the search and the direction of our wealth, which reason and religion equally forbid;—which in regard to personal duty are contrary to the laws of moral obligation, or in respect to what we owe to others, which violate the dictates of humanity or justice. Thus as to the expression in that parable which so strikingly contrasts the relative situation of the rich and poor. “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*.”

There is here a case in which the blessings of a future state appear at first held out merely as an equivalent, which on the principle of justice is to counterpoise the evils of the present life. Under the most appalling image which Scripture throughout has given us of a future retribution, everlasting sufferings appear to be as unequivocally apportioned as the price by which temporal enjoyments are secured. But when we view it in connexion,

* Luke xvi. 25.

we must be satisfied that the moral which under a double aspect the parable was intended to convey, is the great and important truth, that temporal enjoyments are not to be made the primary objects of our choice. This it does by representing on the one hand, the most abject state of human misery, deprived of all its terrors, when taken in conjunction with the never ending happiness of an after life. The utmost felicity of the present world, if purchased by the sacrifice of what is due to the better feelings of our nature, is equally stript of value, when, as its issue, it is seen to be associated with interminable anguish.

But while we thus perceive that it is against the abuse, and not the use, of wealth that the severe anathemas of Scripture are denounced, we shall also find on strict examination, that the fruition of its products which receives her sanction, is of a much more liberal and enlarged description, than by many has been deemed to be consistent with her views.

This is a truth implied even in that aspect of the purposes which the objects that are the medium of temporal enjoyment are intended to answer in themselves. It would make them

solely what they are in part, an exercise of self-denial, in devoting to the good of others what might be subservient to individual gratification. In this, is there implied a use of wealth, extended much beyond the limits within which the advocates of this opinion would restrain its application. To give to this direction of our opulence its perfection, as a part of moral discipline, it must be the exception, not the rule. To make it a test of principle, an evidence of faith, we must not seek to stifle the principles, or eradicate the feelings, in addressing themselves to which the attributes of wealth become the objects of desire. While these are kept within the bounds of reason and of conscience, we must so far indulge them, that when we are, in aid of others, required to forego the means of their indulgence, there may be a sacrifice to principle, a violence to habit, a real exercise of self-denial. There can comparatively be no moral merit, no evidence of humane or generous inclinations, in giving up what we never are ourselves to be permitted to enjoy, or that of which the deprivation we can in no shape feel to be a loss.

But that, as Christians, we are indeed pe

mitted to enjoy the blessings of the present life, to an extent that is as unlimited as reason could desire, may not only be negatively but positively also, may be directly as well as indirectly proved.

Of the rules which we may follow for the direction of our conduct, there can be none more safe, none more authoritative, in the sanctions which it gives, than that which may be found in those delineations of character and conduct, which the Scripture introduces, either with implied or open approbation, for the purpose of illustrating the truths which equally, and at all times, interest mankind. But in many, almost in innumerable instances, we find these illustrations founded not merely on a difference of wealth, as necessarily resulting in a difference of rank, but in a difference of rank, leading to a difference in the general circumstances of life, implying necessarily the widest difference, as well in the nature as in the number of its enjoyments.

In the ----- tant parable, intended
f the govern-

ment of God, than which none can be conceived more deeply and more permanently interesting to man, the principle, indeed, on which the whole of Revelation may be said to hinge, we find together the numerous retinue, the splendid robe, the ornament of gold, the feast, the dancing and the music, expressing or implying many of the more striking attributes of wealth, considered in relation to our personal gratification.

Here are they brought forward, not that they may be reprobated as sinful, or discountenanced as frivolous and unworthy of our notice. They are represented as possessed, permitted, and enjoyed, by one who, introduced for the purpose of exemplifying the views of heaven towards the human race, in every feature of his character, in every portion of his conduct, which are made use of for the purpose of illustrating those views, must be considered, if not as embodying the perfection of human nature, at least as enjoying or permitting nothing, which, under certain circumstances, is not perfectly consistent both with our religious and our moral duties.

But if Christianity has sanctioned *within*

tain bounds the tastes and habits and enjoyments which have chiefly a reference to what are comparatively inferior principles of our nature, by a stronger evidence must those be considered to have met her approbation which have reference to its more intellectual and nobler portion.

But whatever be the principles of our nature which they thus address, to denominate them the artificial wants of human life, is as great an impropriety of language as the application of that term to those divisions of society, of which, in the varying degree wherein they are distributed among its members, the means of satisfying these wants ultimately become the chief distinction. Secondary, they may with all propriety be termed in respect to the period at which they are chiefly felt, or if they are compared with what is absolutely indispensable for the mere support of animal existence. But when society has made the necessary progress, and individuals are placed in circumstances that awaken the dormant principles of which the developement is presupposed, then in all the variety which they can possibly assume, means of satisfying these secondary wants, are

to be held as much the necessities of life, as the objects comprehended under the most limited acceptation of the term. This conjuncture of circumstances being pre-supposed, they are objects of desire as natural to man, as food to the hungry, or as clothing to the naked. As such they are all of them either openly acknowledged, or by the plainest and most obvious inferences from her language and her incidents, are pre-supposed and sanctioned by the views of Revelation.

We are entitled, therefore, to conclude, that by the same general laws we are to be regulated in the pursuit and enjoyment of these two great divisions of the objects of desire. We are entitled to conclude that, where they are neither essentially nor by circumstance immoral, to the pursuit and the fruition of all temporal enjoyments, Revelation as well as reason has assigned no limits within the compass of what our personal exertions may enable us to attain, or within the compass of the means which we may lawfully secure or lawfully employ for making us master of the products of the time, and talents of our fellow men.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE PRESUMED CONNEXION BETWIXT THE PROSPERITY
AND DECLINE OF NATIONS THROUGH THE DEMORA-
LIZING INFLUENCE OF ADVANCED CIVILIZATION.

THE importance of the conclusions at which we have arrived in examining the views of Revelation, and by which we find that they are completely identified with those of reason, in their bearing on the relations that hitherto have been the objects of attention, can by none be undervalued who reflect how much, as to the present life, individual happiness is dependant on their truth. Their value can by none be under-rated who are aware how fully, to the conclusions which are opposed to these, we may trace many of the evils which affect society in its interior aspect, by causing that obstruction to the influence of Christianity, which has so often, but so unjustly, been attributed to the obscurity of her evidences, and the abstruseness of her doctrines. To the un-
f ble influence which is exerted by the op-

posite opinions as well on private as on social life, we shall afterwards have occasion more particularly to advert. But it is not merely from their connexion with individual happiness, or the interests of society considered in detail, that importance is attachable to the views we would support. While agreeable to reason, if they harmonize with Scripture, they derive an interest, though not of a different, of a more extended, nature from their bearing on the welfare of society at large, and because they afford, as it were, a station from which we may descry the fortunes of our country, as they, in a peculiar manner, seem involved in the general destiny of our race.

In reference to the empires which history has brought prominently forward to the view, there is a coincidence to be perceived with which the most careless of observers have been struck. But however striking this coincidence of itself, it is rendered the more remarkable from the resemblance which they severally present to the progress and termination of individual life. From their infancy, in rude and barbarous times, they are seen advancing in importance, until

reach their full maturity of strength. Having continued for a time, in what may be considered as their manhood of existence, a period of senility has been found to supervene, from which they have invariably passed to dissolution, after hastening through successive stages of decay. In drawing inferences from what has been so strikingly exemplified in the history of the empires which have figured in the past, it has been common to conclude that this is a gradation which must be exemplified in the history of all. It is assumed as a position which admits not of dispute, that there is a principle working secretly in the constitution of society, by which nations are carried forward to a certain point, beyond which they cannot possibly advance. There, according to contingent circumstances, they may linger for a shorter or a longer period, but from this they must inevitably decline until they reach a station in their downward progress, whence they with rapidity are hurried to their fall. From industry or from conquest come accumulated wealth; wealth leads to refinement, refinement to corruption, and corruption to decay.

Of the members of the series, here conjoined as causes and effects, the last may be considered as inseparably united. When dissoluteness of habit has enfeebled the body and enervated the mind, and when through the absence of moral principle, an unrestrained regard to private interest supersedes attention to the public good, when a state has these for the general characteristic features of its members, it must speedily become the prey either of foreign aggression, or intestine feuds.

But in admitting the connexion betwixt these, and severally betwixt the other members of the series, we would except to that position by which corruption and refinement are united, making decay to follow as an unavoidable consequence of the last.

Many are the instances which may be brought to prove, as we have stated, that there is this narrow boundary to the improvement of our species; that nations cannot advance towards refinement without approaching to their end, through moral degradation. But if there ever was a time when such might be considered as their natural,

their inevitable progress, we would ask if this be not a point in which the aspect of our nature has beneficially been changed ;—if since the light of Christianity arose, no better hope has dawned upon our race. According to the view in which she is to be considered as regarding the subjects to which our attention has been hitherto directed, is the question we have asked, either to be affirmatively or negatively solved.

Had Christianity imperatively interdicted to her followers, to the full extent, which from her language often seems to be her wish, pursuits essential to the comfort of existence, it is evident that on the general aspect of our race she never could have made a visible impression. Through successive ages might her name have been preserved, and in some corner of the world might her adherents have continued to exist, in the shape of a few enthusiasts, hanging as a burden on the outskirts of society. Equal among themselves, but in a state also equally abject and dependant on that larger portion which would have continued to be actuated by different, and as to everything connected with the present life,

also actuated by wiser views, the followers of Christianity must in this case have been without the numbers, and without the qualities, and without the influence, which could in any way have favourably impressed its features.

But without doing her the injustice to imagine, that it is her wish to limit them in this impossible degree, with many, let us suppose that she looks with a jealous and unfriendly eye on those refinements which are the essential attributes of civilized society. If within the boundaries we have pointed out as those which reason has assigned, she has made it a moral merit to her followers that they should abstain from its pursuits, that they should throw off its habits, that they should reject its tastes, that they should spurn at its enjoyments, still as a mean for the improvement of our species, Christianity is greatly, and beyond what we believe her, infinitely imperfect. From this, it follows, that through the operation of principles which are the inseparable attributes of our nature, society is invariably and necessarily carried into circumstances where its individual members are placed beyond the limits

to which Christianity has calculated the application of her powers. Whatever be the influence, we may then believe that she is capable of exerting, it can extend only to that portion of its progress in which society is placed betwixt the rudeness of habit, and imperfect developement both of the intellectual and moral powers, which equally preclude the reception of her doctrines and the application of her laws, and that degree of its advancement, when, according to the views of her obligations which we combat, if the doctrines of Christianity should continue to be believed, obedience to her precepts is unavoidably to cease. If she regards mankind with favour, that is in exact proportion to the degree in which they are abstracted from the cares, and averse to the enjoyments of the present life; if, before our reason would condemn their conduct, or it could be proved immoral from the word of God, they who pursue those cares, and who reject not those enjoyments, are sternly to be cast beyond her pale, as to every prospect of its permanent improvement, our nature is circumstanced precisely as it was when Christianity

appeared, to flatter it with brighter but delusive hopes. Consistently with such conviction, however, we may possibly extend the period to which her salutary influence may reach, we still behold the point beyond which our nature cannot possibly advance, where its deterioration cannot but begin.

Instead of looking to her as the means, we otherwise might have hoped to find her, by which the circumstances unfavourable to the interests of humanity might be gradually, but effectually and permanently, controlled; Christianity must then be subjected to the same vicissitudes of which our nature is to remain the sport. With revolutions that are similar in their kind, but performing them even within a narrower orbit, her influence may increase in its extent, as our nature emerges from the rudeness and imbecility of savage life; but reaching its utmost limit when society is yet but in the middle of its course: before the latter has perceptibly declined, Christianity must sink under the very power of that civilization which it is so eminently her tendency to foster and promote. While thus she sets upon one portion of our race, even although it be to rise upon another, which,

for the time, is placed in circumstances admitting of being happily affected by her power, with perpetual alternations of renovation and decay, by unavoidable conclusions from the views which we oppose, Christianity, as the medium of a beneficial alteration, must continue eminently weak and inefficient. In the degree, as well as the extent, in which it may affect our race, her influence thus finds a narrow limitation; and in all her efforts to extend the application of her powers, in the natural progress of the social system, she must be destined still to meet a barrier which she cannot pass.

But from all idea of attaching to her system this futility, at least, as a mean of moral amelioration, everything concurs to make the mind recoil. The spirit which she breaths inspires us with the hope, that as yet we are only in the morning of her day; that the salutary rays with which the Sun of Righteousness arose, shall be yet more widely, more intensely shed. Nor is this to be considered as a mere illusion which philanthropy sets up in visionary minds. Reason also prompts that an instrument which in all of

its details appears so admirably fitted to eradicate evil from the moral constitution, without destroying the moral responsibility of man, must be destined for a more extended application, than since its origin, it has yet received. To reason it seems certain that an instrument, to which we must attach so high a value from the ineffable magnitude of the price at which it has been purchased, could never be intended always to be narrowed in application to its present sphere, nor, when that shall be enlarged, to operate with its present limited effect. But independent of the wishes which philanthropy must cherish, independent of the views which reason must support, we have the "more sure word of prophecy," whereon, as a ground-work, we may build our expectations, that so far as its moral features are concerned, Christianity is destined completely to renovate the aspect of the world.

In all the prophecies, which, under metaphorical representations of the reign of the Messiah, have evidently a reference to the maturer stages of the Christian dispensation, there is a decidedness of import by which they mutually support

each other. Making every abatement for the figurative language wherein they sometimes are expressed, the import which they so uniformly bear, is a vastness of dominion, and within that dominion an extent of power, which, in neither of these respects, can find an adequate accomplishment in any of the effects it has as yet produced. From the inadequacy of its past and present influence for filling up the outlines they have drawn, and to complete the pictures which they give, have Christians of all denominations been induced to look beyond them to a time when the descriptions of the prophets shall be more fully realized. Differing as to the distance or the proximity of fulfilment, all have joined in looking forward to a period, when, according to the unvarying scope of those predictions, he shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth; when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea; when from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, his name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered to his name,

and a pure offering. Deprecating the presumption which would "fix for it a time, or give to their fulfilment a determined form, we cannot but believe that they are scarcely to be acquitted of rejecting an important part of Revelation, who do not see in these and similar predictions, the certainty of a great and permanent amelioration of the moral and religious habits of mankind.

But with this, the spiritual improvement of our species, which reason, and charity, and faith, alike impel us to expect, there are arguments which render it demonstratively clear, that its temporal prosperity must equally advance. It is a truth established by the whole of present and of past experience, that, excepting where there are causes that powerfully counteract their influence, the numbers of a state keep pace with its resources; that there cannot be a permanent addition to the one, without a corresponding increase of the other. But this benevolent and wise arrangement, in which nature and providence go hand in hand, seems almost equivalent to a voice from him who is the God of nature, and the God of providence, and the God of grace;

that the latter, as to its laws, must harmonize with both. It is true that we may not be at all times able to perceive the mode in which they work together; but we at least perceive, that if they all proceed from one contriving mind, that if they all be regulated by one controlling hand, they cannot be at open and unceasing variance; there can be nothing in the one which goes directly to thwart and counteract the other.

Yet this must be the case if we suppose their spiritual progress to receive its strongest impulse, its greatest acceleration, and to run the best and longest portion of its course, without a corresponding impulse, without a corresponding acceleration, and a corresponding length of progress to everything which is essential to the temporal welfare and prosperity of mankind. The harmony to be anticipated does not take place, if we suppose the Christian dispensation to meet with the fittest scene of its developement, as is so often done, where, as opposed to that in which our secondary wants are strongly felt, and are abundantly supplied, society is described as being in a simple, unsophisticated state.

Inferior in science, and inferior in art, inferior in all which can afford material for the increase and support of human life ; if this inferior stage of civilization, implying, as it does, not merely a rude but scanty population, be the fittest soil for Christianity to flourish, then nature and providence are at war with grace.

With reverence be it said, this were to imply an absolute, an original defect in the plan on which the Christian dispensation has been formed. It were to make it one proceeding on a principle which takes best effect where it is least required. If, as we have the best authority for believing, it is intended not merely to shew the power, but the wisdom of God for the salvation of mankind, such cannot be its nature that it follows by unavoidable conclusion, that the limits of his spiritual dominions are to narrow in proportion as the boundaries of the natural extend.

To flee from this conclusion, as repugnant to religion as it is averse from reason, we have no refuge left except in the belief that it never was intended that the voice of Christianity should be always heard "as the voice of one crying in the

wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord." From the necessity of falling into this conclusion, with all its melancholy consequences to the prospects of humanity, our only refuge is the firm conviction that in the plans of him who declares the end from the beginning, the Christian Revelation is intended to produce its due, its full, its permanent effect upon our nature, not as it exists amid the scattered hordes of semi-barbarous times, but in the crowded walks of cultivated life.

The more indeed that we shall weigh the circumstances connected with the question, the more clearly we shall perceive that there it meets not only with its widest field, but also with its best and most congenial soil. To this conclusion we may find it difficult to subscribe, if we proceed upon that narrow view of Christian principle and of human duty, which makes the perfection of the Christian character consist in multiplying the means by which we may increase the pains of human life; which sees the wrath of heaven abiding upon all by which it may be either sweetened or adorned. But if that alone be sinful, that alone corrupt, which, as forbidden

by conscience and the fair interpretation of the laws of God, we must trample upon duty to secure or to enjoy; then is it a conclusion to which we need not feel repugnant to accede. If we keep this in view, instead of a discrepance, an incongruity of spirit, implying not merely a disinclination to unite, but an absolute impossibility of union, an impartial examination of the subject must convince us, that in growing civilization, there is a growing fitness of the world, as a sphere for the developement of the Christian system.

In multiplying so infinitely the relations of human life, civilization goes on to multiply the various shapes and bearings of its duties. In doing this, it multiplies the modes in which Christian principle may be applied as a rule for the direction of human conduct. But civilization is favourable to Christianity, not merely by opening channels for the direction of her principles which otherwise must have continued closed against them, but also by facilitating the application of those principles wherever their influence can possibly extend. The more that men in the

progress of civilization shall be freed from prejudice, the more shall they be fitted for perceiving, to its full extent, the strength of evidence which goes directly to support the authority of her claims. The more that they become enlightened in their views, they are the more prepared for duly appreciating the weight of that authority, which, through the full conviction of the inestimable advantage of their bearings on the welfare of society, shall prevent their acting in opposition to her dictates.

In the influence of the Gospel thus extended with its full effect to the innumerable opportunities for the discharge of duty, and the exercise of virtue, to the tastes, the habits, the pursuits, and occupations which belong to civilization in its higher stages, a field has been presented for the improvement of our species, which opens almost with interminable prospect. It is a field which knows no limits within the compass of the working of the mighty power, whereby he who is the author and the finisher of our faith, is able to subdue all things to himself. By this, we are assured, that many of the physical evils which

afflict humanity, shall be ultimately removed along with the moral out of which they spring. Then we may believe, that without the presence or intermixture of the qualities and consequences by which, as yet, they have always been in some measure counterbalanced and alloyed, the lot of human nature shall at once embrace whatever can give happiness, whatever can give ornament and dignity to life. To the very utmost limits to which philanthropy would extend our wishes and our views, a time is yet assuredly to come, when all that is profound in science, useful in art, and elegant in taste; when all that is refined in habit, courteous in manner, and humane in feeling, shall be found completely and inseparably united with all that is rational in principle and conduct, all that is pure in morals, all that is sublime and holy in devotion.

CHAPTER V.

OF OUR NATIONAL PROSPERITY, AS UNATTENDED BY A
DEGENERATING INFLUENCE. ASCRIBED TO THE NA-
TURE OF OUR ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

WHEREVER we must place the consummation of the wishes which philanthropy has formed, being sanctioned by reason, and confirmed by Revelation, from the brightness of the destiny that awaits our nature in the scene of their fulfilment, there comes a ray not only cheering to its more distant prospects, but which throws a light on all the intermediate portion of futurity, and renders us so prescient of its nature, that, assuming the alternative of contingent circumstances, we may, if so permitted to express it, see into the coming fortunes of our country almost with the clearness of prophetic eye.

From the influence of causes, favourably combined in number and degree beyond a parallel which history can shew, she has long attained a reach of greatness and an aggregate of wealth,

which, if we comparatively speak, leave poverty and weakness, to be truly predicated of the richest and most powerful empires, either of ancient or of modern times.

According to the tendency to which we have alluded, to reason by analogy, from the course which other nations have been found to run, that ours has been already of superior length, ought only with the greater certainty to enable us to predict its speedy termination. The superior elevation we have already reached, should but afford the world the stronger assurance of our approaching fall. But when in the case of others, we examine into the circumstances preceding, to ascertain the causes which produced decline, we find invariably that moral degradation was the prelude to their fall; that the destruction of their virtue was the harbinger and cause of civil dissolution. In the views which we have previously stated, there is, therefore, still a hope that for us a happier fortune is reserved. Whatever was the case, in respect to the empires of the ancient world, when a licentious superstition usurped the place of that religion which should

have taught mankind to separate betwixt the enjoyment and perversion of prosperity, these, in the present situation of our race, are no longer to be considered as inseparably joined. We have seen that a period is of a certainty to come, when a barrier that is impassable shall be placed between them. However yet it may fall short of the magnitude which it shall afterwards assume, in the influence of Christianity as it may even now be felt, there is a barrier already placed which is sufficient to enable us to say, that there is no longer an inseparable, a necessary connexion betwixt national wealth and national corruption, betwixt national prosperity and national decay.

But while this is established as a general conclusion, it does not thereby follow, that we shall be permitted, as a nation, to profit of the disjunction Christianity has made. That we may be enabled to perceive what light it is calculated to throw upon our prospects as a people, we must first discover whether, differing widely from those empires as to wealth and power, we come nearer in resemblance by our moral features. But happily for our auguring a favourable issue for

the question we would try, widely as we differ from them in everything which belongs to temporal prosperity, between us and them, there is a discrepance more strongly marked, that to physical resources, above whatever were before attained, we add the best, the highest attributes of moral greatness. To prove that in this respect we do not give our country what she may not equitably claim, through all their most minute details, we might follow the feelings, the pursuits, and habits of society as they exist among her people, establishing her intrinsic excellence in each. But although a proud, and pleasing, and, from the abundance of materials, an easy task, it may at present be dispensed with as an unnecessary work. From the peculiar nature of her political institutions, the principles and views pervading her population through the relations of private life, must necessarily be reflected on her public councils, and are the springs which actuate her public conduct. To the latter, therefore, may we safely look as a mean of ascertaining whether the increase of her prosperity has been inimical to the progress of her virtue. But when we look

to that, we find not only that it has not diminished, but that what has added to the one has gone directly to increase the other. This we have vouched by witnesses whose evidence is above suspicion, as being either unconsciously or involuntarily given. Neither like that of other empires has the fabric of her power been founded on aggression, nor, like theirs, have her resources been directed towards ends unfavourable to the general interests of our nature. With every accession to her wealth and greatness, has proportionally augmented what may be termed her proper, her peculiar glory, to be courted by the nations in their prosperous fortunes, and to be sought to as their help in every time of need.

But we have already shewn that the same favourable change upon the aspect of the world, which makes accumulated wealth to be no longer synonymous with accumulated vice, has equally precluded the necessity of considering prosperity to be the index of decay. It becomes, therefore, not only an interesting, but a useful subject of inquiry, to ascertain the causes of our being the first, even of Christian nations, to give a signal

illustration of the former of these positions. If these be ascertained, we have either the means themselves, or we have the data from which the means may be determined that are to enable us to give a great and permanent illustration of the last.

But let it be asked, what is that favourable circumstance, the predisposing and efficient cause, operating with an influence so greatly, so peculiarly our own, as to have enabled us to present that striking anomaly in the history of the world, of a people which is in wealth so far above the richest, while for piety and virtue we are not inferior, if it is not rather to be acknowledged that we go equally before the poorest of the nations? We answer, and with the certainty of making good our assertion to every candid mind, that for this we are indebted to the unparalleled excellence of our established church.

To the consideration of the views out of which the truth of this position may be clearly seen to rise, we are the more anxiously desirous that attention should be drawn, because it is a point on which there is at present a tendency with

many to refuse her justice ; while many, who are thoroughly persuaded of the services she has rendered, are blind as to the means through which alone she has been enabled to confer them.

In the effort we are about to make to assist in placing in their proper light the advantages of which the Church has been the source, it is not our purpose, for the present, to enlarge upon those obvious qualities of excellence, which are involved in a strict conformity of her views and principles, with the leading principles and views of Scripture. With the exception of the members of that church, whose claim to infallibility precludes the power either of their acknowledging the merits of another, or correcting the errors which are inherent in their own, there are few comparatively, who, in this respect, have not been accustomed to do her ample justice. By the wisest and the best of those who have been placed beyond her pale, to the standards in which those principles are held, the tribute of admiration has been fully paid. Our attention is at present to be chiefly bent on tracing out the in-

fluence of qualities, of which, because they are less obviously connected with doctrine and with practice, the value has often been unappreciated, and the nature misconceived. They are qualities, notwithstanding, which we are persuaded have their foundation upon the views of Scripture as fully as what pertains more strictly either to doctrine or to morals, and qualities, without which we equally believe that the Church could neither have secured the uncorruptness of the one, nor effectually maintained the purity of the other.

CHAPTER VI.

OF PROPERTIES ESSENTIAL TO AN EFFICIENT CHURCH.

FROM the sanction which Christianity has given to the secular employments of mankind, there results the necessity of a portion of her adherents being set apart, and consecrated to the service of religion. The order, which she has thus made necessary, she has also instituted by express appointment. Having leisure to investigate her evidences and the bearings of her doctrines, as they lie dispersed in different directions, and are involved in the history of individuals and of nations existing in the periods which preceded, or that which witnessed, her promulgation to the world, it is the part of such an order so to arrange and to display them to mankind at large, that the latter may be enabled to feel the obligations which Christianity has imposed. By means of this arrangement, while their reasoning powers have still an ample range in the efforts which are required fully to keep pace with the instructions

of their teachers, and by comparing their deductions with the record of Revelation, the body of mankind are at the same time placed in that favourable position for receiving and retaining Christian principles and Christian feelings, which would otherwise be incompatible with the multiplicity of pursuits which occupy their time.

But for the instrumentality of such an order, so to detail her evidences, so to explain her truths, so to enforce her sanctions, it is evident, that to the exclusion of every impression from Christianity that could lead to a beneficial influence on belief or practice, there is a moral certainty that the minds of men would be thoroughly engrossed by objects, in which their attention must be partially absorbed.

With that regard to the circumstances of human nature, which belongs to hers as to a reasonable service, Christianity not only institutes this necessary order, but lends her sanction to the claims of justice, that the temporal interests of her more immediate servants should not be neglected by those whose spiritual interests they guard. On this point is her language as clear and unequivocal, as it is consonant with reason: "If we

have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel*." We have thus her express authority for saying that in every country which professes to be, or would continue Christian, there must not only be an order of this nature, but that provision must be made for those by whom its offices are filled. It seems, at first view, but a just conclusion, that the nature of that provision has been also fixed, by what was made for those who occupied their place while Christianity was in open communication with her source.

We have seen, however, that there often are occasions on which it is the part of Revelation to lay down general principles and to give general illustrations, not universal and invariable rules. From the circumstances under which we have also seen that her followers were at that

* 1 Cor. ix. 11, 13, 14.

time placed, it is equally apparent that this must be considered one of the occasions on which we are to find in theirs the index and the model, not the standard and the measure, of our conduct. To make such a provision for the members of that order as may be sufficient for the diffusion and maintenance of pure religion, in the ordinary circumstances of society, we must be guided by these circumstances, not by such as were the individual and peculiar features of times and situations that have for ever passed away.

Keeping this in view, the first and most obvious characteristic of that provision for the ministers of religion by which the spiritual interests of mankind may be effectually preserved, is that it should be one sufficient for the supply of all their reasonable wants. But when we form our estimate of what should constitute those reasonable wants, it is requisite to guard against a sophistry, by which the enemies of religion seek often through her teachers to do injury to her cause. Taking advantage of those portions of the Scriptures, the scope and tendency of which we have endeavoured to place within their proper light, taking advan-

tage of the views which ignorance has often built upon them, the enemies of the Gospel introduce her teachers as obliged by their instructions to represent mankind to be bound by a rigid self-denying law. On this misrepresentation those teachers are held up as inconsistent, selfish, insincere, if they themselves accept of a supply beyond what may suit this mortifying rule.

But if Christianity be indeed that reasonable service which supersedes not the enjoyment, and, excepting when its habits may be essentially immoral, which looks not with an unfavourable eye upon the world ; if she has not made the misery of the present, a passport to the happiness of a future state, the reasonable wants of life cannot, as to the rest of men, and where circumstances permit, be so limited either in their number or extent. But Christianity has commanded a provision for her more immediate servants, that they may be enabled to procure, what, consistently with the spiritual good of others, they cannot obtain through personal exertion. If others, therefore, be permitted to pursue them, it will be difficult to shew why the equivalent

which the former are to receive, should exclude them from their portion of life's temperate enjoyments.

But when we have obtained all that is requisite for the support and comfort of its individual members, it does not thereby follow that, as a provision for the maintenance of a Christian church, it is adequate to the purposes which it ought to serve. The deference and respect which men are disposed to pay to those who are possessed of wealth and its concomitant advantages, has been a subject of remark in every age and country. Often as it has been noticed, the tendency in question has been as uniformly ranked by superficial observers, among the weaknesses, if not among the vices, of our nature. But like every principle which has been implanted in our frame, in itself it will be found a wise provision of the Author of our being, only in its excess a weakness or a vice. By causing man instinctively to attach a value to the fruits of industry, it leads him instinctively to that assiduous application of his powers, which is at once the parent of happiness and the nurse of virtue. By inspiring

an involuntary deference and awe of those in whom the fruits of industry appear, that dangerous cupidity is repressed, to which, from other principles of our nature, the sight of these would necessarily give rise. The effect, therefore, of this tendency, is to secure to us the fruits of application by protecting us from the aggression of our fellow men. In doing this, it anticipates the voice of conscience, and unites with it in establishing the claims of justice before they could be enforced by the dictates of self-interest made known through the tardier deductions of our reason. A principle which must be of such extended use, as might be naturally expected, is found to be of universal and unceasing operation. As such it must be taken into account in modifying the provision which a church receives. Nothing that is mean, nothing that is sordid, must be suffered to attach to the condition of its teachers, unavoidably operating to the disadvantage of religion. Care must rather be employed that, by a full and liberal provision, those teachers may be invested with that respectability of outward circumstance, which, in itself con-

ciliating the reverence of mankind, may predispose them to obey the mandate they receive.

Considering the Gospel, both as the rule of faith and as the guide of conduct, it is evidently not merely from instructions orally delivered, that it may be enabled to exert an influence on mankind. The excellence of its doctrines, and the advantage of its precepts, must be brought more directly home both to the understanding and the hearts of men, when imbodyed in the life and conversation of their teachers.

But we have found that from the effect of principles, which are part of human nature, society inevitably separates into classes, having each its appropriate duties, each its appropriate feelings, each its appropriate sources of enjoyment, and each its proper and peculiar mode of practising the duties, of evincing the feelings, and of tasting the enjoyments, they also have in common with each other.

From this it happens, that the practical illustration and exemplification of the principles of the Christian system, which is decidedly calculated to impress the understanding or affect the

heart, and, through these, to influence the conduct of society throughout any one of these divisions, may at the same time, and to a great degree, be a dark, an unintelligible comment to the others. Yet no provision, which is so arranged as to exclude from its advantages any of the natural orders of society, can be held to be in unison with the spirit of the Gospel.

If with God there is no respect of persons; if the poor of this world have not monopolized the riches of the next, while establishing the means by which the advantage of Christianity may be extended to mankind, those who have been blessed with temporal prosperity are not, with justice, to be excluded from any of the means by which others are intended to be made wise unto salvation.

It is, therefore, necessary that a certain number of her ministers may receive so large a portion out of the general provision which is assigned a church, that they may be placed in that identity of circumstance, may have that intercommunity of duty and of feeling, that the principles of religion, as exemplified in them,

may be a guide of conduct to the opulent, to influence their opinions, and to modify their practice.

In vindicating the justice, and asserting the necessity, of paying a due attention to the essential interests of the higher classes, by having some of the teachers of religion fitted more peculiarly to become their pastors and their spiritual guides, let it not be said that we make one religion for the rich, another for the poor. In doing this, we but extend to the general and common circumstances of society, that illustration of the liberal nature of the Gospel spirit, which, under extraordinary circumstances, was given by the most zealous, by the most efficient, and certainly not the least disinterested, of its apostles, when, adapting the mode of his instructions to the varying circumstances of those with whom he was brought in contact, he was made "all things to all men, that he might by all means save some."

Whatever as to measure, be the nature of that provision which it is fitting that the ministers of religion should receive, if meant to be available for

any useful end, it must be something which they are enabled to claim as their exclusive right. Leave them, in any measure, dependent for support on those who are meant to profit by their office, and you lay the foundation of an evil which may constitute that office a curse, and not a blessing to mankind.

Where there are human wants there will be human weakness, and it is only by a fixed and permanent provision for the former, that the latter can be exempted from what must be almost an invincible temptation in shunning the evils of a precarious supply. In avoiding such, there are but two ways that present themselves, into one of which the teachers of religion must be, inevitably, forced to enter. When the voice of reason has been found insufficient to effect their purpose, necessity will prompt them to resort to superstition as a stronger power, and they will draw from fear what avarice would withhold; or, by conduct equally fatal to the interests of religion, glossing over her unpalatable truths, they will ground their influence on their power to make her speak that language which is most congenial to the wishes,

most flattering to the corrupted passions of mankind. If we would avoid the risk of making them unfaithful to the duties of their office, we must not leave the teachers of religion in dependance upon those to whom they are to minister, so as to make them find it for their interest rather to blind than to enlighten men. That they may ensure the means of their subsistence, we must not lay them under the temptation of considering how they are to please, when their sole consideration should be how they may instruct. If we would guard the spiritual welfare of mankind from the most imminent of the dangers to which it is exposed, we must beware of giving them a power, which they will often, although unconsciously, employ in overawing those, who, in the exercise of their functions, should be above the fear of man ;—we must not leave to them a power, which they will indubitably, although, perhaps, unconsciously, employ, in saying “ to the seer, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.”

If human affairs were of a uniform tenour; if t

aspect of society underwent no change ; if, from the past and present, we were able with certainty to descry the future, so far as a provision for its ministers is concerned, we should have everything required of an efficient church. But society is in a state of constant fluctuation ; the aspect it presents continually changes. Its different parts, at any given time, afford not a greater contrast to each other, than that, which, at different stages of its progress, each presents in contrast with itself. Temperance and luxury, simplicity and refinement, although fixed, and absolute as moral qualities, are relative and variable as to many of the modes in which they are expressed. As means increase, as circumstances change, that may denote the one, which previously marked the other.— Where society is progressive, there is a constant transition of the refinements into the conveniences, while the latter are passing into the necessities of life. But in this general progress of our nature, in this procession of its various ranks in which all are advancing in a path, where each keeps its relative position to the rest, we see the necessity that the provision which the mi-

nisters of religion are to receive, shall be of such a nature, that it may not, from being always of a stationary amount, prevent them from advancing in the general career.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE DEGREE IN WHICH THE PROPERTIES BELONGING TO AN EFFICIENT CHURCH ARE TO BE FOUND EXEMPLIFIED IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, AS THEY RELATE TO THE GENERAL ATTRIBUTES OF HUMAN NATURE.

IF we keep in view the outline of what reason and Scripture point to as the means by which the influence of religion may be most effectually maintained, and if we observe how nearly, as far as circumstances have permitted, the Church of England has filled up the outline we have given, we shall find ample room on which we may stand justified for the peculiar efficiency we would ascribe to her.

The ground-work of that efficiency, we consider to be laid in the correctness with which she estimates the views of Revelation, in respect to their bearings on the present life. Agreeably with these, she seeks to impress upon the minds of men, that in some measure they are but strangers,

they are but pilgrims upon earth who seek a better and a heavenly country. But she is not forgetful, that from the tenour of these views, it equally results that they are not to look with contempt upon the present world, that they are not to remain indifferent to its duties, to abstain from its pursuits, or to consider its enjoyments indiscriminately sinful.

It is therefore, that in enumerating the blessings for which she directs our gratitude towards the father of all mercies, while the spiritual have their due superiority assigned, those that are but temporal are not forgotten. While she calls upon us to thank him, above all, for the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory, by associating them with these, she gives their relative importance to the others. She thus lends men the sanction of her authority for believing that there is an innocent enjoyment of all the blessings of this life, and where an innocent, a laudable pursuit of all the means by which they are obtained.

Proceeding still upon this great and leading principle, that neither by the light of nature, nor

the views of Revelation, that neither by the course of providence, nor by the plans of grace, are duty and happiness to be considered as disjoined, this inference she confines not to the body of mankind. She extends it also to the teachers of religion, as partakers of the principles which are essential to the nature they have in common with those whom they are destined to instruct. Consistently with this conviction, she seeks to abstract her ministers from the pursuits, the occupations, and enjoyments which religion leaves open to the rest of men, so far only as may be necessary for securing to the latter, the advantages which their office is intended to confer. But in doing this, she has laid that office open to the capability of rendering services to man, of which, in kind, in number, and degree, he must otherwise have been as certainly, as he would have been unhappily, deprived.

The accuracy of the views which she has taken, enables her to contemplate, to its full extent, the degree in which the time, and the attention of mankind at large, must be absorbed in secular employments and pursuits. By extending, as far as requisite, the inferences, which, by reason and

Revelation, she is fully warranted in drawing from those views, to the members of that body which she is required to set apart for preserving the knowledge and the influence of religion, she is enabled fully to obviate the danger, otherwise attendant on the degree of that absorption as it relates to others. It is thus that she sees herself not merely authorized, but imperatively required, to turn the attention of the teachers of religion, as a step preliminary to their entering on their office, to studies and pursuits in number and degree, which, to those who are actuated by less enlightened views, appear to be unessential to the fulfilment of its duties.

To these, on the contrary, she requires them sedulously to direct their minds, as the means that are indispensable for making them thoroughly acquainted with its nature; as opening to them a knowledge of the subjects, being ignorant of which, they must be blind leaders of the blind, and strangers to the religion it is their office to explain. Through this correctness of her general views, judiciously extended to the teachers of religion, in giving up to these the reasonable enjoy-

ments of the present life, she is enabled to lay a sure foundation for securing the faithful discharge of their important trust, while she thereby obviates one of the strongest of the temptations to its dereliction to which human weakness can be subjected, in finding happiness opposed by duty. By leading her to seek for them a fixed, unalienable fund, out of which those reasonable enjoyments may at all times be obtained, the accuracy of her views, extended judiciously to the members of the priesthood, has enabled her to obviate that further obstruction to their official duties, which, from principles inseparably attached to human nature, must attend on the uncertainty as to the means of a provision for their future welfare.

It is thus that she has been enabled to set free the members of her priesthood, from all undue subjection to the power of others, of which the necessary consequence must be to induce the teachers of religion to give those false impressions of her nature which may enable them to retain their influence on the human mind by working insidiously on its passions and its fears;—or, failing of this effect, which interdicts their speaking in that

open, manly, and independent tone, which it becomes them to assume when they address mankind in the name, and as ambassadors of him who hath a right to teach "as one having authority."

But although these are steps of which the necessity can not be over-rated, in seeking to discharge her most important trust, the Church is yet to be considered as coming short of all the necessary measures. She has, indeed, done much of that which is required, in seeing that her ministers shall possess a perfect knowledge of the doctrines and the principles which it is their business to impress on the belief of others, and of the various evidences by which they are supported. She has done much, in the precautionary means which she adopts; in her seeking to ensure their acting fairly by the views of Revelation, so as neither to conceal nor warp its truths. But though much has been accomplished, she has not done all, in causing the unsophisticated dictates of morality and religion to be inculcated, when apart from what must be the field for the display of their effects. Example may extend where precept is not heard; seeing may convince when

argument has failed. But in acting on this conviction, and in this way seeking to consult the spiritual interests of mankind, they still are found decidedly to profit by her just appreciation of the nature of this life.

Through this she is enabled to send the teachers of religion out into the world, not in rash or inconsiderate zeal, but with due attention to the circumstances under which they are to act. Whether they be peculiar to her messengers themselves, appropriate to those to whom, through their conduct, her lessons of instruction are intended to be addressed, or circumstances shared in common with each other, from the accuracy with which her estimates are formed, she passes the whole of them in review before her, while she guides herself accordingly in assigning to her ministers the attributes they point to as essential to success.

In making their qualifications answerable to these, an obvious advantage derived from the liberality and extension of her views, is found in the power which they confer upon the Church of giving to religion, in the person of its ministers, all the

recommendation which intrinsic excellence is capable of receiving from the susceptibility of the human mind, of being favourably impressed by outward circumstance. That she may avail herself of this, that it may add its weight to the example which they set, it is her wish to see her ministers appear before the world with the requisite advantages of external fortune. It is her wish that they should appear before it under circumstances which may enable them to conciliate the attention of the well-disposed, and by commanding the respect, to prevent the counter-acting influence of those, who, notwithstanding its innate dignity, might little reverence the office which they bear. It is thus that the Church looks forward to the power of hindering the spirit which continues working in the children of disobedience from arraying on its side, and employing as a barrier to the progress of religion, the whole of that authority and weight, which, looking to the attributes of our nature both extrinsic and internal, it were idle to expect, as it were folly to desire, that outward dignity should cease to give. But taking anxious care to commit the charge of

demonstrating the practical influence of religious truth to men whose ability and whose integrity may fit them for the trust; provident of the means which may ensure to them a favourable reception from those to whom their example is intended to be recommendatory of the adoption of religion as a principle of conduct, the Church is equally desirous, and from the wisdom of her views, she is enabled to provide that a proper sphere should be prepared for its display.

The benefit which that example may confer on others, must evidently be proportioned to the wideness of the field that shall be opened for it, and to the nearness with which it can be brought to those on whom it is intended to produce effect. In other words, the prospect of its being accompanied with advantage to mankind, must be commensurate with the degree in which, without compromising what are essentially and characteristically circumstances of either, the situation of the taught and of the teacher may be brought to coincide. It is therefore, that the Church sends out the latter into the world to mingle in the common intercourse of life; that wherever its

habits are found to be consonant with the dictates of religion ; that wherever its pursuits are compatible with attention to their peculiar duties, the inclination to adopt those habits, and to follow those pursuits, is prompted and encouraged rather than repressed. But, duly to recognise the benefits which the Church thus makes herself the instrument of conferring, it is still to be kept in mind, that there is scarcely one pursuit, or one enjoyment of the present life, to be considered vicious or injurious in itself ; that they are so, only, when misdirected as to their object, or when carried to excess. It is also obvious, that the greatest danger of men being led to err in either of these respects, arises from their being left in ignorance, as to every power of contributing to the real happiness of life, how infinitely the use surpasses the abuse. Hence the eligibility of securing, in every practicable instance, an example of that use, a demonstration of the advantages with which it is attended.

Thus are we led to see, and equally to admire, the wisdom of the Church, in giving to her ministers encouragement and means to mingle with

society under circumstances, which, to the eye of the superficial and the ignorant observer, seem to derogate from the sacred nature of their office. Through these, on the contrary, it is evident that she extends their sphere of usefulness, and obtains, through them, the means of turning into powerful auxiliaries of religion and of virtue, pursuits, and tastes, and habits, from which it were impossible, were it even desirable, to detach mankind ; but which, without the influence and example of her teachers, to give them their direction and to fix their limits, instead of being subsidiary to virtue and religion, must often become subservient to the designs of those who are inimical to both.

It is also to the circumstances under which she sends them forth, consequent on the aspect in which the Church regards the nature of their office, that society, with us, has been indebted for the highest of the temporal advantages, which a Christian priesthood may confer upon the world.

It is thus that she has, so fully, been enabled to make it the medium of exhibiting the form under which the value of religion may be most readily

appreciated and most permanently felt, while it sheds its hallowing and its purifying influence on the duties and enjoyments of domestic life. But, in contemplating this effect and purpose of their office, not only does the Church look forward to the power of making religion contribute most directly, most intensely to the happiness of man, but as to its every beneficial purpose and direction, of extending and of rivetting its influence on his mind. If there be any mean by which that influence may be effectually extended, through the instrumentality of her ministers, even to the habits, the obligations, and pursuits as to which an attention to peculiar avocations may prohibit their giving an actual exemplification of its power, it must be by making them the means of leading men into those scenes where Christianity is identified with the strongest of the ties which nature has imposed ; where, in seeking to habituate them to reverence her dictates, the example of their teachers at once addresses the understanding of mankind, and makes a visible and forcible appeal to the deepest and the tenderest feelings of the heart.

Whatever, in a word, may be the means through which it is accomplished, the more that the Church thus binds them to society by its common ties, without abstracting the attention of her ministers from their own peculiar and specific duties, the more does she in doing so consult the general welfare of mankind. The more that she thus gives to them a personal and immediate interest in that welfare, the more does she strengthen and increase their motives for giving such direction to the influence they obtain, as shall be most conducive to the common good.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF EFFICIENCY INHERENT IN THE CHURCH, AS THEY ARE NECESSARILY AFFECTED BY INEQUALITY OF RANK, AND BY THE NATURAL PROGRESS OF THE SOCIAL SYSTEM.

IN directing our attention to the leading views with which the Church has entered on her duty of providing for the diffusion of religious feeling and of moral conduct, both as to what should be the duties of her ministers, and what the qualifications which are essential to their success; if candidly considered, it will be found impossible to withhold the praise of accuracy and soundness from the general principle on which she has set out. But whatever admiration she may on this account be held entitled to demand, we should be doing slender justice to her merits, and but imperfectly conceive of the enlightened nature of her zeal, did we believe that she stops short, even at that onward station of her progress to which we have accompanied her, in securing the religious interests of mankind.

In seeking to inspire them with that just appreciation of the nature of the blessings of the present life, by which they are encouraged to pursue them, as far as may consist with attaining the enjoyments of a higher state, she does not close her eyes on the distinctions to which they necessarily give birth, from the inequality that must attend their distribution. Neither does she in words acknowledge these distinctions, and virtually annul the sanction which she gives, by acting as if those, who have been less abundantly provided as to temporal advantages, are peculiarly the objects of divine regard. Taking no limited, no partial view of Revelation, but looking to the whole counsel of God for the salvation of mankind, she sees in it a boon which is held out to all. Acting on this conviction, while she teaches all men to remember, that, in the sight of God, as to a future world, a perfect equality subsists between them, she reminds them also, that this, is an equality of prospect and of hope, perfectly consisting with the widest discrepance of present fortune.

Without a

implied, the

names of all the classes of society mingle with her petitions at the throne of grace. In the blessings she invokes, she takes into account their several necessities, while she deprecates the evils to which they may be all, either collectively or separately, exposed.

Keeping these distinctions steadily in view, by the most judicious selections from the volume of Revelation, and where she does not employ its very words, with a sameness of spirit couched in a similar simplicity of language, a body of instruction has been provided by her care, which fully and forcibly explains to every class, their common, their peculiar, and correlative obligations.

But difference of external circumstance not only leads to difference of duty, but, as we may almost literally express it, also to a difference of walk and conversation. Generally speaking, the members of the several orders of society seldom or never come in contact with each other. With many which they possess in common, there are modes of thinking, and of feeling, and of acting, which are proper to each in their peculiar station,

but mutually uninteresting and unintelligible to the rest.

From this, we see that the Church must execute but half her task, in seeking to extend the benefits of religion by embodying its spirit in the conduct of its teachers; if, having those distinctions in her view, she sends them only into certain of the walks of human life, while others shall be left without the advantage of this visible display.

Such, however, must be virtually the case, if she makes no difference in the circumstances under which she sends them forth. Should they have all the same provision for the way, of those to whom they ought to serve as guides, there may be some, who, entering upon their Christian course in circumstances that are somewhat similar to theirs, may be enabled still to keep them within view, and thus be practically taught, by following in their steps, so to pass through things temporal, that, finally, they lose not things eternal. But by this arrangement, it must inevitably happen, that there are many to whom it is impossible that they can serve as guides. There must be many, whom, in the tenour of their life, they cannot

possibly approach, many who are unable to keep pace with them. There must then be sections, not merely individual members, of society to which the influence of their example cannot possibly extend. The better, that from their actual circumstances, that example is in this case calculated to impress the feelings, and to direct the conduct of any one of its divisions, the further must the circumstances of her teachers be, from what are necessary to extend this benefit, to others. But, of the evils, which must follow from this partial distribution of her cares, the Church is still as fully provident, as she is wise in the means by which she guards against them. It is therefore, that by a diversity of rank among her ministers, rendered effectual by a diversity of wealth, she endeavours to provide for that diversity of circumstance, which, separating society into a diversity of classes, brings diversity of tastes, diversity of habits, and diversity of feelings, unavoidably implying a diversity in the forms of moral obligation.

It is impossible indeed, that by any foresight, or by any care, she can bring them to that identity.

of circumstance that shall meet those variations to their slightest shade. There is a point in the descending scale, where this were to imply an incompatibility with the qualities, which must be pre-supposed in every beneficial purpose of their office. But her object is attained as far as is consistent with the nature of the case, if she can vary them so far, as to cause the circumstances of the teachers of religion, so nearly to approximate to those which mark the broader outlines and divisions of society, that the individual members of its minuter sections, may have some of those teachers brought so near to them in outward circumstance, causing that degree of coincidence in the shapes and boundaries of their respective obligations, that, easily allowing for the points in which their situations differ, all may at once and readily perceive, not only from the precept but from the example of their teachers, the manner in which religion ought to influence their lives. But what is thus of such importance in itself, the Church endeavours to accomplish; and although untoward circumstances have deprived her of the means of carrying the operation

of the principle into full effect, in so far as regards the mode of their provision, yet, by the division of her ministers into bishops, priests, and deacons, she has made the necessary arrangement for this object being met. If, for argument, we may suppose the first to comprehend the dignitaries of the Church of all denominations, if the second we consider as applying to the beneficed, and the last to the unbeneficed, portion of her clergy; then by their gradations and corresponding difference of external circumstance, the Church has, in truth, provided, that none of the great divisions of society should be without their appropriate spiritual guides. The members of these several orders, illuminated by true knowledge and understanding of the word of God, explain its doctrines, inculcate its precepts, and enforce its sanctions. But while thus, in their preaching, all of them set it forth; as their respective circumstances may prescribe or may permit, they shew it accordingly in their living. There is thus no rank, no order of society, of which the example can be supposed to have influence on the conduct of the others, which is itself without the example of some of

these teachers of religion to be taken as a model for the direction of its own. It is thus that the members of every class, directly or indirectly, are, both by precept and by practice, taught how they may in all things, and although in different ways, yet equally, contribute to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, with a life and conversation becoming the Gospel.

If candid then, in the expression of our judgment, both as to means and end, we must applaud the system upon which the Church proceeds, in seeking to diffuse the influence of religion. But if it has already been contemplated in all its parts, if we have seen the whole of the arrangements which it makes, however these may separately and in their union be entitled to admiration, it is a system, still, which is liable to the charge of imperfection as a whole. It still leaves much to be desired, as applicable to the circumstances of human nature, if it contain not some provision by which the Church, in distributing the blessings of religion, may be enabled to dispense them with a steady, as well as with an open and i

The principles of our nature, from the abuse of which spring up those evils which the influence of religion is intended to counteract, are in their operation constant and unceasing; they, without some countervailing influence, must be continually subject to abuse. If religion, therefore, is expected to work effectually as the counteracting principle to these, in its operation it must be as constant, as unceasing as the others. If we would not leave it at a disadvantage, which it must always be difficult, and often be found impossible, to recover; if we would not give the former head, and suffer an accumulation of the evil, which no subsequent endeavours may be adequate to remove, we must have a uniform, uninterrupted application of the means through which the counteracting influence is applied.

But although the Church has been unfortunately denuded of a portion of the funds, necessary for following, to their proper limits, the enlightened views with which she has contemplated the qualifications requisite for the ministers of religion; happily for society, she has been enabled to retain them to a great extent, and proportion-

ally, as a body, to qualify her teachers for the office which they hold. Happily also for the interests of society, and to the real friends of virtue and religion, it must be subject of the highest gratulation, that along with the degree in which she has retained the means that have so far enabled her to fulfil her views, she has also been enabled to retain the power of giving to their accomplishment a permanent existence.

It attends the mode in which they are provided for the exigencies of their situation, both as regards the higher, and the larger, and which constitute together the more influential portion of her ministers. Whatever change the aspect of society may exhibit, their circumstances are incapable of change so far as either to affect their relative situation to each other, or altering their position in respect to the circumstances of the community at large, to withdraw them from the station and deprive them of the attributes, which the Church, upon the views of reason and of Scripture, has contemplated as necessary for the successful discharge of their official duties.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS OF THE CHURCH, AS
THEY HAVE BEEN MODIFIED FROM A REGARD TO
INCIDENTAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

FROM the knowledge we have now obtained of the general arrangements to which the Church has had recourse, in the fulfilment of a duty, so important in its consequences to society at large, we are prepared to judge of one, which may, in some measure, be considered a supplementary provision to those which have already come before our view. To this it is peculiarly desirable that the attention of the candid inquirer should be strongly drawn, since of all the provisions which the Church has made, it is, perhaps, the one, of which the motive has been most grossly misrepresented, the tendency of which is most completely misconceived. In the view which she has taken of the nature of their office, of the extent to which it may be rendered capable of carrying the influence of religion out into the

world, and of making it the actuating principle of conduct, we see the cause, and in this we see the reasonableness, of that anxiety which the Church evinces, that her several agents should go forth upon their mission, adequately provided both for the number and importance of their duties. If their example is to be productive of the anticipated good; if they are expected to have weight and influence in society; if they are to form its habits, or to bias its pursuits; if they are to purify its tastes, or to enforce its obligations, there are some of those habits which they must adopt, there are some of those pursuits in which they must engage, some of those tastes in which they must indulge, some of those obligations which they must discharge. It would be doing little justice to the wisdom which first gave this direction to the duties of their office, if the Church did not believe these various modes of influencing mankind to be all of them comprehended under those good deeds, the sight of which is to lead others to glorify their Father which is in heaven. But this also presupposes, as the Church has done, that means are to be provided with no niggard hand; for

enabling them to let their light so shine, that they may not sink into obscurity amid the general mass; that when mingled with the constituent portions of society, such may be their station, and their circumstances such, as to render them conspicuous to the general eye, and to give to their example adequate extent.

Yet in a moment of that hour, otherwise of such auspicious influence, and without considering how fully it was required for the perfection of the system upon which the Church proceeded, the state came in betwixt her and the means of its completion. It deprived her of no inconsiderable proportion of the fund, on which she had a right to calculate, for making the operation of her system fully meet her views. As its complete removal was beyond her power, nor could she look for the recovery of her alienated rights, the task which now devolved upon the Church was to devise the means by which the evil might be lessened in extent. It was requisite to consider how the interests which it was her duty to protect, might be as far as possible, prevented from suffering through this mistaken conduct of the state.

The principle to which she looks for the protection of those interests, we have found to be the union of example and of precept, modified by the circumstances of that portion of society, on which the different orders of her priesthood are intended severally to make impression.

But the importance of example being joined with precept, of the influence of the former being strongly felt, rises in some measure with the gradations of society. With these increase the number of our duties, and the amount of evil or the amount of good, resulting from the mode in which they are discharged. But the portion of her funds of which the Church has been unhappily deprived, was part of that to which she had to trust, for bringing home the influence of example regulated by Christian principle, throughout a large proportion of society, to which another and a larger part, is looking up with feelings which ensure to us, that their character and conduct shall most decidedly be biased by the moral and religious habits of the other.

Evils therefore of the greatest, of the most extensive nature must ensue, if the members of

this more influential portion of society, shall either receive erroneous impressions of their duty, or shall cease to feel the influence of religion in enforcing its performance. Yet these are consequences we may with certainty expect, if the Church shall send among them teachers, who, from their station in her priesthood, are to be considered as the models by which she intends that they should regulate their conduct, so inadequately provided that they can neither properly exemplify their most necessary duties, nor give authority or weight even to that inferior degree in which, by their circumstances, they are enabled to display them. Nor does the evil implied in this, confine itself to the effect which it produces on the mind and conduct of the individuals, before whom they come so inadequately prepared.

In any considerable number of its members, but more especially in a number so considerable as that, from which the state has taken the provision, which the Church would have individually assigned this portion of her priesthood, their appearing to the world stript of its characteristic

attributes, must proportionally impair the respectability of the body of which they form a part. It must diminish the authority and impair the usefulness even of those members who are fully qualified for every duty of their office, which the well-being of society requires them to fulfil. That the interests of society may not be subjected to this deteriorating influence; that the progress and exertions of a well-appointed and energetic body, may not be counteracted and retarded, by the unarmed, the inefficient being mingled in its ranks, the Church has changed her dispositions so far as was required for lessening the danger, against which it was impossible she could entirely guard. Since the encroachment of the state, had taken what would have been sufficient, for giving a full provision to as many as she would otherwise have employed, by diminishing the number among whom it is divided, she resorts to the only means for reaping any practical advantage from the use of what is left. While she thus makes an adequate provision for a smaller body, out of what would have left the greater comparatively

unprovided, in so far as the general influence of that body is concerned, in taking from its numbers, she has added to its strength.

But it is not merely as a means for palliating an existing evil; the obviating the consequences which must otherwise have ensued from the infringement of the state on the amount of her possessions, that has made the Church resort to a junction of those provisions, which, according to the general plan of her endowment, we might be led to think, should be separately distributed among the members of her priesthood. It is by means of this, that she is enabled to avoid a danger arising from a different cause, and to secure an advantage of incalculable value, which it would be difficult, perhaps impossible to shew, that there can be any other mean of her attaining.

The general principle, which regulates the distribution of her funds among the body of her ministers, to whose endowment this question has immediately a reference, evidently proceeds upon the supposition, that the portion of society more immediately intrusted to their spiritual guidance,

is spread throughout with uniformity of number, and uniformity of circumstance, so that the nature of the cure is only to be varied by its superficial extent. But although this must be presupposed, in the theory, if we may so express it, of its distribution, it would be superfluous to remark, were it not for the obvious consequences being, by many, so completely overlooked, that this is a uniformity, which in nature never has been, never can be realized.

From causes of which the origin is involved in the obscurity of early times, sometimes from local or from other circumstances of which we often may perceive the mode, but never fully the extent of operation, the members of society are congregated in greater or in smaller numbers, while the proportion of its classes, which these aggregates contain, is also as to numbers most indefinitely varied. But we know that it likewise happens, that the habits and dispositions which characterize the members of these denser portions, although, still, in a degree which may be indefinitely regulated by circumstance, are formative of the character and moral conduct, not

only of the adjacent, but more distant population. In this, we see how necessary it is, that the attention of the Church should be directed, in a peculiar manner to the members of those classes, which have greatest influence on these denser parts; which, giving to their character its general impression, through them become impressive of the character of society, where it exists in greater numbers, but these in a more loosely aggregated state. But in the situations we have described, the individuals and the classes, whose character and conduct are thus of such importance to the community at large, are necessarily placed in circumstances that require a more extensive application of the means, through which the general nature of their duties is to be properly exemplified by their teachers; which are to be otherwise communicative of the influence of religion.

It also happens, and where its occurrence cannot always be foreseen, that those means are not, in a due degree, accumulated locally where their application is required. But the converse of the reasons which have caused this deficiency in

certain parts, may produce a redundancy of those means in others. Situations may be conceived, where, if we compare the exigencies of the ministers of religion with what they are, in such as we have now described, those means may be considered to be accumulated, beyond what is required by the necessity of the case. There may be situations, where the influence they exert on character and conduct, beneficial as it locally must be, though not confined entirely to the spot, is yet, comparatively, circumscribed in its extent. It comes, therefore, to be a question for the consideration of the Church, whether she is strictly to abide by the law which she has prescribed for the direction of her conduct, or to adjust it to the circumstances which require its modification, that she may meet its spirit by departing from its letter.

Is she to conceive herself imperatively bound, in every instance where it may occur, to leave a portion of her funds, by which a member of her priesthood is invested with attributes of a definite description, at a point where they are comparatively unproductive, while there are others of its

members whom she leaves in comparison destitute of the advantages which it is capable of securing, and placed in situations where the presence of those attributes is most imperiously required.

It could not be expected in a case like this, that a church so wisely provident in others, should hesitate as to the course it is incumbent to pursue. She does not look to means forgetful of the end ; that she may preserve the instrument, she does not sacrifice the work. She is still awake to the absurdity, of acting as if she conceived herself invested with a fund, merely, that she may be enabled to afford subsistence to as many individuals as it is capable of maintaining. She looks to the number among whom it shall be shared, in reference to other and more important objects. She looks to the property of which she is possessed, as attached to her in the character of general guardian of religion and of morals ; as destined for contributing to the public good. Everything connected with its distribution she considers as a question, which, from the nature of the case, she is bound to hold sub-

ordinate to the other. Individual endowment, in its relative amount, she considers to be only so far of importance, as she can render it conducive to this specific end. Seeing that the general disposition of her funds may be so modified as more effectually to promote her views, she does not hesitate to interpose with her authority, that she may shew herself deserving of the discretionary power with which she is intrusted. She takes a portion from the situation where it is comparatively barren of advantage, and she transfers it to a station where it contributes to invest some member of her priesthood with attributes of influence, and energy, and power, which, from the relative difference of situation and of circumstances, must be productive of the happiest and most abundant fruits.

But in making her election, she is still considerate of the means by which the greatest good is to be so obtained, that it may be also counterbalanced by the least amount of evil. In the room of those whom, for either of the reasons we have explained, she takes from what might otherwise be considered their appropriate sta-

tions, she deposes others of the teachers of religion, who are equally capable with those whom she removes, to expound its doctrines and explain its precepts, while they are not left without the means of giving the benefit of example to the greater proportion of their spiritual flock. Where their means fall short of what is requisite for extending that benefit to the smaller portion, here, the evil is, in a great measure, avoided, which we shewed was to be apprehended from a similar incapacity, in members of the priesthood having a higher rank. The difference of their official character, and of their general circumstances, is of that decided kind, that for the higher members of society, as to the general tenour of their life and habits, it cannot be supposed that theirs is intended to afford a model. The evil that might be dreaded from the want of those external attributes of influence in others, which we have elsewhere shewn to be of so great importance, is also obviated in respect of them. Independent of moral and intellectual worth, theirs are an authority and means of influence, chiefly borrowed and reflected from that body into which

they are looking forward with the prospect of admission ; while, to the dignity of this, the Church so eminently adds, by the arrangement through which their subsidiary services are more extensively required. To the individual members of their spiritual charge, to whom they cannot practically serve as guides, the evil, if not obviated, is at least diminished by the additional authority which this increasing dignity of their order gives to the members of the priesthood, whose more appropriate duty it must be held to add, in respect to them, the influence of example to the authority of precept. Of the latter there are always some, who, although at a greater distance, are still within their sphere of observation ; some of them, with whom, from the circumstances connected with their station in society, they are often brought in contact in the intercourse of life. While, therefore, instead of having them conjoined, in these particular instances, there are a certain number who must look to one for precept, for example to another ; yet, since they still have both, it is, in truth, rather an apparent, than a real departure from the nature of her plans. But with

whatever disadvantage it may be partially attended, this is infinitely counterbalanced by the increased intensity, if we may so express it, which this provision gives to the general influence of the Church. It is more than counterbalanced by the power, with which she has been thus invested, of turning that influence in every direction, of making it be felt in every degree which the public good may for the time require. It is through this that she is enabled at once to concentrate and make it bear on points, where the impressions which it makes she is certain shall be copied by society at large. It is thus that she communicates an impulse, which, eminently beneficial where it is first received, is ultimately propagated with the happiest effects, even to the remotest corner of the state.

Whether, therefore, we consider it as a resource for avoiding a difficulty with which she has been made, unnecessarily, to struggle, or a mean for coping with one which arises naturally out of the circumstances of society, the union of benefices, against which objection has been so strongly taken, must, with its consequent arrange-

ments, be considered as indispensable for the welfare of the interests it is her duty to protect. So far from being justly to be considered a defect, a moral blemish in the character of the Church, as far as principle extends, it is in perfect harmony with the admirable features which we otherwise have found that character to exhibit. It is another proof of the advantage which is derived from the union of integrity and wisdom in her views. It is true, that, although the principle is sound and good, she may err, and she must injure, if she carries it to excess. But, if we consider how far from both the reasons we have assigned, there are causes operating to make such a union an object of absolute necessity, or of general expedience, we shall be cautious of believing rashly that she has so erred. We shall see room for coming to the opposite conclusion, if we form our judgment by the practical result.

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CHAPTER X.

OF SOME OF THE NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL FEATURES
WHICH BEAR WITNESS TO THE WISDOM AND EFFICI-
ENCY OF THE CHURCH.

AGAIN, appealing to the uniform tenour of our public history, appealing to the aspect which society throughout internally exhibits, we repeat the proud conviction of our mind, that, in regard to the attributes of moral worth, we, as a nation, are inferior to none, if it is not rather to be at once acknowledged that we are the first in virtue, as we are, undoubtedly, the first in power. If justified in making the assertion, on these grounds, are we departing further from the truth, when we attribute, mainly to the instrumentality of the circumstances we have described at length, that great, unparalleled felicity of lot, by which our country has attained her height of temporal prosperity without giving up her virtue as its price. An intimate relation may, indeed, be traced between the national attributes of intrinsic worth,

to be adduced as evidence of the first of these positions, and the qualities we have enumerated, which, as features, are not less prominently characteristic of the Church, than they are adequate, as causes, to the production of such effects. We find a numerous and enlightened body, well instructed as to every point connected with the principles, the evidence, the history of the religion which they teach. We have this body imbued with the deepest veneration for the doctrines of their faith, but equally impressed with the conviction, that, in their reference to a future state of being, those doctrines are never, even in idea, to be separated from the influence they are intended to produce on present happiness through present duty. In explaining and enforcing this relation, we find them placed not partially and occasionally, but, as to a great degree, we are entitled to assert, universally, uninterruptedly, in circumstances which enable them to exemplify the influence of religion on almost every branch of human obligation. We find them placed in circumstances by which the attention of mankind is powerfully excited, and turned towards them with

predisposition to yield that reverence to the office which they hold, so eminently conducive to their being suitably impressed, as well by the example, as by the precept of their teachers. That precept, that example, we find always such as the nature of their sacred character requires, because, such, as a body, has always been their situation in regard to temporal advantages, as nearly to preclude the possibility of a motive for seeking the praise of man more than the praise of God.

To the uninterrupted influence of such a body, so qualified, so impressed, so circumstanced, teaching and acting as we have thus described, may we trace the nature of that religious character for which, as a people, we have been so long distinguished. To this, we may ascribe the moderate and healthful nature of its spirit, neither sinking into the torpor of indifference, nor the gloom of superstition, nor rising to that enthusiasm and feverish excitement which evaporate in useless, or explode in violent and misdirected feeling. To the means by which we see that character is formed, we may clearly trace the

nature of its spirit, as a conviction, present to the minds of all, that a belief and veneration of the doctrines of religion are inseparable from a rational obedience to her precepts.

Independent of the measures to which we have already had occasion to allude, as characteristic of our country, in regard to its intercourse with other nations, in the public measures which have a reference to objects of internal regulation, we may perceive how happily, through the efficacy of the arrangements which the Church has made, the spirit of a pure and practical religion has been brought to bear upon the minds of those who are the depositaries of political and legislative power. The more that laws have multiplied upon us, from the multiplying relations connected with our general increase of prosperity, the more have these afforded the opportunity of discerning the natural effects of her enlightened zeal. The growing influence of Christian views in the light in which they are contemplated by her, as she impresses them on those by whom our laws are framed, is to be readily perceived in the growing ~~they~~ have continued to evince, to do

equal justice betwixt man and man, abstractedly from circumstance of rank or fortune. This influence may be as fully recognised in the increasing anxiety, displayed by those to whom has been intrusted the application of those laws, that they should be administered in strict accordance with their spirit. If we seek the demonstration of this Christian influence, as it is exerted on our civil and political relations, in their reference to them who are placed under authority, we find it, unequivocally, in their cheerful acquiescence, in the wholesome restraints of law and salutary control with which it invests their rulers. We find this influence unequivocally displayed, in the infrequency with which the portion of our population, from education and from circumstance, necessarily, least amenable to the influence of reason, have been seen to take advantage of the freedom they enjoy, upon occasions, when, by the pressure of incidental evils, their submission to authority has been severely tried.

A strong and practical impression of religion, carried forward by the Church into the intercourse of life, appears in that upright, elevated

feeling, in various forms, yet equally pervading every rank, through which, it has become their characteristic as a whole, to be awake to the admiration of what is fair and liberal in principle and conduct, to be equally abhorrent of everything approaching to injustice or oppression. The proof and fruit of this impression of religion, as it exerts an influence on individual conduct, are also visible in the fulness of that confidence wherewith the inhabitants of other countries, in their intercourse with ours, have been accustomed to rely on individual faith. They are seen in that integrity of conduct by which this confidence has been so fully earned, an integrity which, unimpeachable in itself, approaches to something of miraculous extent, when we take into account the multiplicity of transactions connected with the relations of our industry and commerce.

The general influence it exerts on morals, may be traced in its effects upon those members of society, in whom, as invested with our superabundant wealth, is found the patronage that constitutes the nourishment, and points the direction of the finer arts. To this may be traced the

care, with which, as a nation, we have chastened these, so that with us, they are the handmaids and the ministers of virtue, which elsewhere are the panders and the instruments of vice.

Another and a signal proof of the inestimable advantages which the Church confers through the nature of those impressions of religion it is the tendency of her principles to give, and by the wisdom of the means she has employed for their diffusion, is to be found in the direction, which, with us, literature and science have so decidedly received. The majority of those whom other nations have, for their proficiency in these pursuits, been habituated to consider as their ornament and boast, are identified, both as to their names and works, either with an almost puerility of mind, that wastes the powers of intellect on objects of subtile and abstruse research, having no relation to the real welfare of mankind ; or with a reckless criminality of heart and purpose, which, warring with the better feelings of our nature, to gratify a spirit of demoniacal ambition, would sacrifice those principles of virtue and religion that give our every interest its chief sup-

port. But in proportion to the greater extent of mental cultivation, we, in a peculiar manner, have been free from that perversion of genius, that obliquity of intellect, which, in the pride it feels, that it can see a part, insults the wisdom that contrives the whole. Common as in other countries it has been, with us the spectacle is comparatively rare, of powers of mind, which, properly directed, would have been an honour and a blessing to humanity, yet, being thus perverted, have become the shame and scourge of human kind. But that such should be the case, may not be matter of surprise, when we reflect how often, by means of the wise provisions of the Church, the members of that order, through which she communicates her principles, have taken the lead as individuals; how uniformly, as a body, they have kept pace with all who have been first in such pursuits.

From the union, which, in and by her teachers, the Church so uniformly maintains betwixt the various forms of intellectual pre-eminence, and a calm, and rational, and practical religion, we may readily perceive why almost all amongst us, who

have been noted for the one, have been equally distinguished by their reverence for the other. To this we must ascribe it, that the numbers through whom our country has been illustrated by their success, in literature and science, have imparted to it a far more enviable glory. To the general bias which the Church has given, it may, with justice, be attributed, that they have shunned the allurements of that spurious fame by which so many have been elsewhere led astray ; that with an ambition worthier of noble minds, they have sought their praise in turning their attention towards objects that might be of practical utility in life ; that they have turned it successfully towards that object in which its happiness is so immediately involved,—the converting the powers of genius and research into instruments and means for strengthening the cause of virtue and religion, by elucidating the wisdom and benevolence of God.

The beneficial consequences of an enlightened faith, that keeps, as we have seen it must do, the attention of its votaries ever steadily directed towards its practical effects, as it appeals to the

sympathetic feelings of our nature, is perceptible in the countless, ever multiplying forms in which the opulent are seen directing their resources to the relief and comfort of the afflicted poor.

The spirit of the Church, under the form of a rational and mild religion, may be traced in the influence it so happily exerts, while bearing uninterruptedly on our private duties, however modified by rank or fortune. It may, in a more especial manner, be traced, in the influence it exerts on those which have an intimate relation to the closer ties of life. To this may be ascribed the magnitude of importance we have still continued to attach to these, amid the great, the various transformations, which, from the progressive alteration of our circumstances as a people, our manners and our habits have of necessity undergone. To the fitness that has thus been given to it as the resting-place of man, as a sanctuary not only from the cares and business of the world, but a happy refuge even from its pleasures, we may trace that peculiarly characteristic strength of feeling, with which, from the highest to the lowest of our ranks, we have been found to hallow the

very name of home. Hence, the jealousy, the sacredness of care, wherewith we have ever guarded it from all that can polute—the fondness with which, as to our chiefest treasure, we have clung to the enjoyments of domestic life.

Were it requisite to look for further illustration, we should find the aspect of society, whatever be the point from which it can be viewed, equally confirmatory of the truth of our position. We should find it, shewing, that it is chiefly to the views and consequent provisions which have engaged our notice, that the Church has been indebted for that energy of resistance by which she has overcome the moral dangers incident to the rapid augmentation of our national resources. While the purifying influence that emanates from her, through these, is equally and continually diffused, she is enabled to commend herself, by manifestation of the truth, to every man's conscience in the sight of God. It is, therefore, justly to be attributed to these, that while there are so many virtues of which the traces have been obliterated from other countries, by the inroads of corruption, invariably attendant on the increase of

their wealth, with us, an afflux of prosperity, in all respects, so infinitely exceeding theirs, has hitherto been productive of no further change, than, occasionally, to give those virtues but another, not unfrequently a better form. To these we may ascribe it, that there are virtues so remarkably, so exclusively our own, growing up with our astonishing, our unequalled progress in all the attributes of national advancement, virtues which, through the influence of the properties described, the Church has even generated out of its excess.

In the extent of the importance we would thus attach to the presence of the qualities we have detailed at length, from the degree in which they are inherent in the Church, it will be readily perceived, and we shall afterwards have occasion further to evince, that we are not insensible, that we are not unjust to the nature of the attributes she otherwise displays. But, while to others of her qualities, we give all the value they so justly claim, as those by which she is so truly constituted a pure, to the properties we have enumerated, must we still revert, as those which have

mainly contributed to preserve her such, as the properties by which, in their subservience to the others, she is rendered so eminently an efficient, church.

By these has she been exalted to that elevated station whence she has been enabled effectually to watch the progress of society, not believing every spirit, but trying the spirits whether they be of God. To these has she been hitherto indebted for the power which has enabled her, checking innovation where it were dangerous to change, to give a fixed and permanent existence to everything that is valuable in the eye of reason. While manners, and while habits, in themselves indifferent, and but associated with virtue as its vehicle or its garb, have been shifting and passing with the fashion of the world, through the energy and efficiency which these attributes impart, the essentials of morality have been preserved and heightened ;—because, amid all the fluctuations necessarily incident to human things, through these, as instruments, she has been still enabled to give to the age and body of the time, the very form and pressure of religion.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE QUESTIONS THAT ARE CONNECTED WITH THE ENDOWMENT OF THE CHURCH, AS THEIR CONSIDERATION IS SUGGESTED BY THE PREVIOUS VIEWS.

To the conviction of every candid mind, we trust we have established that to the Church we are indebted for services so estimable both in number and extent. But in the reasoning we have employed to ascertain the means that have empowered her to confer them, a light is thrown on subjects, to which a more than usual interest has recently been lent, although at all times of importance, not to the Church alone, but, if we are correct in our conclusions, vital to the every interest of the state. It will be readily perceived that we allude to questions that have been agitated in connexion with the general circumstances and position of the Church, more especially in relation to the amount and distribution of her funds, and to the mode in which her revenues are chiefly drawn. Respecting the first, and more general question,

of the amount of her endowment, it is known to have become with many a favourite topic of declamatory zeal. By vague and indistinct representations of the extent of property with which she is invested, or, where these representations are of more definite description, by the exclusion of every modifying circumstance, they have sought to give exaggerated impressions of the subject. By these it is intended to give a colourable pretext for the assertions which they make, that she has swallowed up unnecessarily, and prejudicially therefore, a large proportion of the general wealth; that the despoiling her of this were but an act of justice to the community at large. Others, who do not coincide with them in the full extent to which they wish their innovations carried, so as materially to diminish the amount of her provision, yet arraign the expediency of the mode of its investment, as it especially regards what goes to the support of the parochial clergy. Inveighing loudly against this, they represent it as a rude contrivance which savours of the policy of barbarous times, as unworthy to be retained by an enlightened age. They represent it as a clog to

industry, as a barrier to improvement, which constitute it at once a private oppression, and a public loss.

As a remedy for the evils it is thus supposed to carry in its bosom, it has been, by some, proposed, that the present should be superseded by what they deem a system of more simple operation. Placing a valuation upon this description of the property of the Church, it is proposed to constitute her members, to whose support it has been hitherto devoted, stipendiaries of the public to an equivalent amount. By others, who, on general principles, approve of such a commutation of their rights, it has been suggested that they should receive this compensation at the hand of those who are now depositaries of the fund out of which their income is derived, in, what is termed, a more exceptionable mode. With views that have some affinity to theirs, in ascribing inexpediency, if not injustice, to the present system of provision for the body of the priesthood, there are many who make an affected interest in their welfare a pretext and ground-work for directing their hostility against another portion of

the members of the Church. In the course of our previous reasoning, we had occasion to allude to the partial derangement which her plans have undergone. The alienation of a portion of her patrimony deprived her of the means of giving, universally, in the first instance, to the beneficed, and, consequently, through them, of giving to the unbeneficed members of her priesthood, that liberal provision by which she might have been enabled to carry her views into complete effect. Connected with this derangement in their mode of operation, although proceeding from circumstances over which she was herself without control, by those of her opponents to whom we now allude, have folly and injustice been attributed to the Church in regard to the manner of her distributing the funds, of which she has remained in undisturbed possession. By these she is accused of stinting the portion of her more deserving children, while, with all the blindness of a step-dame partiality, she lavishes, capriciously, her bounty on a few.

To speak without a metaphor; by this description of her opponents, the revenues of the heads

and dignitaries of the Church are represented to be out of all just proportion to the services they individually render. They are held up by them as greatly and as shamefully disproportioned to the remuneration of many of the inferior members of the priesthood, if determined by the relative importance of their duties.

On these assumptions rest the propriety of the remedies they suggest. Stripping the former of what is gratuitously denominated their superfluous wealth, a fund is thus proposed to be created, out of which those members of the priesthood who are now comparatively unprovided, may be remunerated more adequately to the value of the services they give. A fund, it is contended, might be in this way raised, so available for their general provision as a body, as to admit a considerable reduction of the burden with which, upon certain of the interests of the community, the present form of their endowment has been conceived to weigh.

Previously to our adverting more particularly to the tendency of the propositions we have stated here, embracing the leading innovations which

have been suggested in relation to the property of the Church, it is necessary to premise that the subject, generally, is one, in respect to which, recent circumstances have excited prejudices and awakened feelings that are unfavourable, if not to the discovery, at least to the candid recognition of the truth. This necessarily points out the proper mode of our procedure in employing for its elucidation the conclusions which our previous reasoning has enabled us to form. It leads us naturally to inquire how far, either in regard to number or extent, the evils have existence which are the subject of complaint; where in any measure they may actually appear, how far they are removable by the remedies proposed.

In considering whether there are evils actually existent, and with justice to be attributed to the nature of her provision, the subject of inquiry chiefly claiming our attention, is how far her property collectively considered, is, in the eye of reason, to be held surpassing what the exigencies of the case demand. In the prejudiced and hasty view it has so generally received, even from those who do not intentionally misrepresent the

subject, a general source of fallacy is undoubtedly to be found in their looking to the Church as the actual possessor of the whole of that, which, in common language, it is usual to allude to as what has been set apart for her endowment. But, although so much must come to be deducted upon this account, yet is it a source of error, upon which it is not our purpose to enlarge. Granting to her patrimony all the amplitude, which, making this deduction, it is generally represented to possess, while we admit it to be of great, still must it remain to be considered how far it is also of unnecessary extent. But here another, an abundant source of error may be detected in the reasoning, if such it can be called, which they generally adopt, by whom the affirmative of the question is supported. Where anything in the shape of argument takes place of the vituperatory declamation to which they usually resort, the reasoning employed by the opponents of the Church is, in the first place, to state in full, if not exaggerated terms, the amount of property with which she is invested. Viewing this in connexion with the revenues of churches,

confessedly possessed of scantier funds, they forthwith draw their inference, that if an ecclesiastical establishment may be supported, with the smaller sum, by as much as it is less than what our own receives, is the latter to be considered as maintained at an expense which is an improvident application of the general means. But ere this conclusion can legitimately follow, there are evidently various considerations to be taken into account. The absolute difference of ecclesiastical revenue, is in such a case by no means to be considered, necessarily, as the measure of the difference of expense at which those churches are respectively maintained. Before this can be admitted, it must first be proved that the countries which support them are placed in circumstances identically the same. If they are not in circumstances parallel with each other, if they differ merely in the amount of capital, which they severally possess, the churches in those countries may differ widely in the actual expenditure they lead to, while the burden relatively is the same to each. But nations cannot differ in the mere amount of wealth, without a corresponding dif-

ference in the nature of the wants of which the members of society are susceptible in each, leading to a difference in the nature and the value of the means by which those wants are to be properly supplied. In this, and the general difference of circumstance to which it otherwise must lead, we at once perceive how fallacious, or rather how absurd to argue, that ecclesiastical establishments, in nations which are thus differently situated, should be placed in circumstances identically the same. If the exigencies of society be properly consulted, it will inevitably follow that the interests of virtue and religion, do require that the wealthier country, in an absolute, if not a relative degree, should possess the more liberally-portioned church. But of the countries which have been cited as possessing ecclesiastical establishments, of which the burden is so trivial in comparison of ours, it will be readily admitted, that as to industry and capital they are all of them decidedly inferior to ourselves. Having their resources, therefore, so imperfectly brought out, the poverty of the Church is in these but in proportion to the

poverty of the state. The amount with which it is endowed by them cannot, with any shadow of propriety, be adduced as an example for a country, whose resources are in every shape developed to a high degree. With all the modifications of the circumstances of society, consequent upon the full developement of these, in portioning our Church, to make the conduct of such states the very model and the rule by which we are to walk, is as absurd in principle, and as inapplicable to practice, as to make infancy the standard by which manhood should be guided, which is to define its wants and limit its supplies.

But to judge of the expediency of imitating the countries, which we are so loudly called upon to envy for the simplicity and cheapness of the establishments they possess, let us suppose them to be in any degree, as to national circumstances, so similarly situated, as to admit of a comparison betwixt them and us ; even in this case, is there nothing to be learned from the mere juxtaposition of the greater and the smaller sum. To judge of this expediency, it still remains to be determined, and to this our efforts shall be now directed,

how far the one is to be considered as partaking of a wisely frugal, or an ill-judged parsimony and narrowness of view ; whether the other has been caused by a heedless extravagance and waste of means, or by a praise-worthy liberality of spirit, which, provident of the best and wisest ends, in aiming at their accomplishment, withholds not what is necessary to ensure success.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE SPIRIT AND CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH OF ROME,
AS THEY AFFECT OUR ESTIMATE OF THE RELATIVE PER-
FECTION OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES.

THAT we may be enabled to perceive how the general amount of the provision of the Church is affected by comparison with that of others, the only means by which we can attain a just conclusion, is by taking the extent of their revenues in connexion with the mode in which they are expended. The question of deficient, or of extravagant, or of relatively just and adequate endowment, is involved in that of general eligibility. It is a question to be determined, in a great degree, by the perfection of the provisions they respectively embrace for answering the purposes, on account of which ecclesiastical establishments are to be held as called for under any form—for the diffusion and support of religious principle and of moral conduct.

To say how infinitely, in the respects, the

Church which England has the advantage to possess, is superior to the one to whom she was so long and so unhappily subjected, may appear to be irrelevant to the point at issue. In itself it would be but a slender praise, considering in all respects how eminently unfaithful that church has been towards her sacred charge. To this, however, it is necessary to advert, since it is chiefly by observing certain of the circumstances as to which they differ, as to which they coincide, that we are enabled to perceive how infinitely, both in spirit and constitution, she is superior not only to the Church of Rome, but equally to the churches, which, simultaneously with herself, threw off the yoke of papal domination.

Whether we are to judge her by the tendency of the principles she openly avows, or by the nature of the testimony which history has so uniformly borne against her, it is utterly impossible that unprejudiced inquirers can entertain a doubt as to the leading object of the Roman church. Through the instrumentality of her more immediate servants, from whom she claims unqualified allegiance, her object has in-

variably been the building up an influence, which, bringing all besides into abject submission to the civil power, through the subjection of the latter to her own authority, is to render her, in the persons of her higher ministers, the haughty arbitress, the uncontrolled disposer of the lives and thoughts, and fortunes, of mankind. From the steadiness and the craft with which she had for ages been advancing to this end, there is a melancholy period in the history of the world, when it might well be doubted if anything was wanting to its complete attainment. On adverting to this period, during which she was enabled fully to exemplify the perfection of her system, we find society throughout, exhibiting a scene, wherein its different orders were looking downwards with the view of abstracting from their inferiors whatever could immediately contribute to their own advantage, and be ultimately employed for adding to that power, of which the aggrandizement was inculcated upon them as the first of duties. Descending in the scale, this abstraction from inferiors of what could give importance in the social system, became more and more complete, until

the body of mankind, deprived of all that could take from her security or add to her importance, were stript of every attribute either of political or moral weight. In the system, therefore, of the Roman church, we have a state of things in which the principle of subordination is employed, not as the instrument of common good, but as an instrument through which the many may be made subservient to the purposes of the designing few. On looking to it as it was seen, when she was enabled to display it in all the fulness of its operation, in hers we see a system through which she sought to sacrifice to the ambition and the interest of that few, not only whatever was most essentially conducive to the temporal welfare of mankind at large, but much of what was requisite for making them acquainted with the principles of that faith, which she yet professed to hold as indispensable for their attaining the happiness of a future state. But while thus proceeding towards the establishment of her power, at the expense of much that was essential to the knowledge of the doctrines, that the stability of the dominion might not be endangered, she found it

necessary, and she hesitated not, to weaken and obstruct the influence of religion, imperfectly as that influence could otherwise have been felt from the care which she employed for the concealment of its truths.

That they might be instruments at all times ready for the accomplishment of her ends, she saw that it was necessary that her ministers should be without inducement to give a preference to the cause of Christianity; in other words, a preference to the common interests of human nature, in the innumerable instances in which they clashed with what was requisite for the fulfilment of her selfish views. She saw that it was necessary to break those bonds of union, by which they might have been so intimately connected with society, as to obtain a deep, a permanent interest in its general welfare. Of this she knew that the natural consequence would ultimately be to awaken them to a sense of the iniquity of her conduct, of the magnitude of the injuries she inflicted on the world. She knew that a fellow-feeling in the general cause was likely to inspire her ministers with a wish to

emancipate the human race, to raise it from that state of intellectual prostration which left its members the unquestioning, the unresisting victims of her avarice and ambition. It was to obviate this danger to her selfish aims, and as the most effectual means by which she could prevent the general interests of society from ever being blended and identified with theirs, that putting to the last, the most unerring test, their blind unreasoning submission to her will, she taught her ministers to claim it as their best and highest praise, that they were trampling on the principles, that they were outraging the feelings which God and nature called on them to cherish. Such was undoubtedly the object in her eye, when presuming on the ignorance into which she had already plunged the world; when as the most effectual means by which she might deepen and prolong its gloom, she dared to insult the judgment of mankind, by giving them with the avowed intention of recommending Christian principle and of enforcing Christian practice, those whom she had taught, as a part of moral obligation, to refuse the ties, and to elude the

claims which, to have sought so anxiously to tighten and enforce, is among the noblest of the attributes Christianity displays. It was thus that regardless of the consequences both to their temporal and their spiritual interests, and with as gross an imposition as any she has ever practised on the credulity of our race, she sent out into the world, professedly for the purpose of exemplifying the influence which religion is to exert on human conduct, ministers whom she had previously interdicted from discharging, or had taught to disregard many of the most important, the most sacred of the duties which it is the very purpose of religion to impose or sanction.

Nothing it is evident but a total disregard to all integrity of motive, nothing but a desire to enslave the human race, and at the same time to retain it in perpetual ignorance of her usurpation on its rights, could have induced the Church of Rome to venture on a step that is so utterly repugnant to the dictates of reason and the word of God. But as the different churches of the Reformation must be considered, all of them, as free even from the slightest imputation of being

actuated by views of this unhallowed kind, the one we have alluded to, as to principle, is a measure that has been shunned by all. All of them have seen, and all of them have shunned, what integrity of motive being presupposed, must have been termed the palpable absurdity of sending forth into the world, as patterns for the religious imitation of mankind, those whose example stops at the very point, where it should begin to throw its clearest, and its steadiest light. None of them have bound their ministers, by rules which render their example worse than nugatory, when, instead of being one which is to lead mankind to reverence the duties, to set a value on the enjoyments of domestic life, on the contrary, is an example that goes directly to encourage the dereliction of the former, and to make the latter be disparaged and contemned.

But while we must give them every credit for integrity of motive ; while we give them credit also for the wisdom of their conduct, so far as the general principle is concerned ; while endeavouring to extend the influence of religion, through the conduct of its teachers, to the scenes of com-

mon life; yet, of the full advantage to be derived from this, the churches of the Reformation have been more or less deprived, with the exception of our own, by the injudicious nature of the steps which they had taken, for avoiding some of the more prominent errors of the Roman church.

In the precipitancy with which they fled from everything which bore the stamp of the authority of Rome, while much that was absolutely indispensable was secured by all, somewhat that was useless was brought away by many, and much that was valuable, was by others left behind.

It was thus, that, although with conscientious and disinterested views, in seeking to avoid the guilt attaching to her motive, they rejected with indiscriminating zeal the means by which she had succeeded in making the principle of religion, in that imperfect state in which it was maintained by her, so eminently subservient to her temporal aggrandizement. They knew that the Church from which they had receded, had acted in absolute contempt of the authority of our Saviour, in the declaration which he made, that his was a

kingdom not of this world. But in seeking to act in strict conformity, with what they believed the views in which it had been made, they fell, many of them, into an error of the opposite extreme. In some respects, they acted as if their zeal had blinded them to the obvious truth, that his words could never be intended to be interpreted in such a sense, as to militate against the means that are essential to support the influence of his religion, as intended for the kingdoms which are in this world. While endeavouring to hinder the recurrence of that evil, which the interests of our nature had so severely felt, when church and state had mutually pandered to each other's profligate abuse of power, they destroyed, or at least impaired, that due connexion, and that mutual dependance on each other, which form the bond of union betwixt the temporal and the spiritual interests of mankind.

It was their ardent wish, to rescue Christianity from the reproach to which she had unjustly been exposed, through the treachery of a church that had identified her wishes, with an indiscriminating obedience, with a slavish deference to authority.

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with ignorance, with superstition, with everything degrading to the moral dignity, or hostile to the real welfare of our nature.

But in abjuring the errors of the Church of Rome, many of the churches, otherwise so justly entitled to the appellation of Reformed, gave Christianity the appearance of being still unfavourable to the interests of humanity, by sanctioning evils of an opposite description. In fixing their attention on the general, they forgot the particular circumstances of our nature. In their anxiety to restore to all, their equality as Christians and their rights as men, they neglected to make religion give with sufficient depth, the stamp of her authority, to those distinctions which must subsist among them, not only in conformity with the existence of the other, but giving value and security to their common rights. Acting on the contrary, as if Christianity refused to sanction those distinctions, many of these churches, by abrogating all gradations in their priesthood, effectually weakened the connexion of religion with the relations of common life, while they thereby effectually, and almost intentionally with-

drew their teachers from direct communion with its higher orders. Where this effect was not produced, by innovation on the ancient system, carried intentionally to such extent, yet by the general bent, which they had themselves contributed to give its course, a change was introduced in other countries, by which the gradations left among their ministers by their respective churches, were rendered nugatory, from the members of their priesthood being deprived of attributes, which should have been suffered to remain distinctive of their rank. From these, or other causes, it will be found, that the members of the priesthood in almost all the churches of the Reformation, have been left without the means of reaching the more elevated portions of society with the capacity of giving the necessary influence, either to the example which they set, or to the precepts they inculcate. In being kept apart, and at a distance from these orders, they have been debarred access to many of the most powerful of the springs of human conduct, of which religion thereby lost the power of regulating the movement, so as to give to them an impulse be-

neficial to the general interests of our nature. The developement of the evils of which this must be the source, may, from various causes, be for a while retarded, but in every country, where such is the situation of the members of the priesthood, the necessary consequence must ultimately be, a weakening of the general influence of religion, and throughout the different orders of society, a loosening of those bonds of mutual obligation, in which its welfare, as a whole, resides.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE SPIRIT AND CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, CONSIDERED IN THEIR ABSOLUTE SUPERIORITY TO THOSE OF OTHERS.

THE more that we examine into the spirit and constitution of the others which have departed from communion with the Church of Rome, the more will it be seen, that in their eagerness to escape from papal domination, they proceeded with a haste through which it too often happened, that truth was confounded with the opposite of error.

But as with ours, reformation was a calmer, a more gradual, so could it scarcely fail of being also a more rational, and more perfect work. Acknowledging the Church, from whose communion she deemed it incumbent to recede, still to be a Christian, though a corrupted church, she proceeded with the circumspection that was becoming an occasion, when, with so much to throw aside of a nature at once both adventitious and

impure, there was a danger of rejecting something that might be allied, something that might be essential to Christianity itself.

It could not but be obvious to the unprejudiced observer, that a system, which, so triumphantly for ages, had maintained the cause of fraud and superstition, must have possessed the means of appealing strongly to the principles of the human constitution. It was natural to imagine, that among these, there might be some, which, properly modified, if not unchanged, might be employed as instruments to benefit mankind, by furthering the cause of genuine religion.

It was, therefore, that the Church set out upon the principle of changing or rejecting nothing, until, by careful examination, she felt thoroughly convinced that it was clearly repugnant to the word of God, or puerile or oppressive in itself, or of a nature so liable to abuse, as to be either of uncertain expedience or of dangerous application. By the mode in which she thus proceeded, she not only retained the abstract truths of Christianity in their purest form, more completely unadulterated by the admixture of mere human

views, but she placed them in a light in which they are less in danger of being misconceived, than could be done by churches which proceeded with as sincere, but less enlightened views.

If tried impartially by the standard by which all are to be judged, in doctrine we shall find her showing uncorruptness.

While churches are to be found, that, in this respect, may be confessed to rival her in the scrupulous integrity wherewith she has endeavoured to fulfil her task, we shall find few that can approach her in the completeness of success with which she has made nothing obligatory as an article of belief, that has not undeniably the authority of Scripture, with which nothing is omitted among what she has made it indispensable to believe, that has undeniably its foundation there. With this, is intimately connected, that prominent feature of intrinsic excellence, and of relative perfection, the soundness of speech, she so eminently possesses. Expressing with circumspection, and at the same time with all possible simplicity, the articles of her faith, she

carries human reason as far as it is capable of judging of their nature. She checks it in its advances, only when it would rashly enter, where, in seeking to be wise beyond that which is written, it must either deviate into pernicious error, or be lost in the wilds of barren speculation.

Of the relative advantage she has derived from the mode in which she had proceeded in freeing Christianity from the contaminating influence of papal error, we have an evidence in what is most intimately connected with the practical influence of religious truth. We have it evidenced in the consummate skill, wherewith, adapting it to the circumstances of mankind, as beings conversant with external objects, as well as with abstract principles and feelings, she has given an outward form and manner of subsisting to that worship of which the essence is in spirit and in truth. Hence the superiority so strikingly evinced, in the few and simple, but impressive ceremonies, with which, as it were, she clothes, and cherishes, and adorns religion. Shunning that poverty of outward circumstance which leaves it in a nakedness, that chills when it is expected to invigorate de-

votion, she equally avoids that multiplicity of splendid, but at once unmeaning and oppressive rites, by which the beauty of holiness is covered and obscured, often her very spirit stifled and extinguished.

It is chiefly, however, to the views and the provisions, to which our attention has been previously devoted at so great a length, that we must look to be persuaded of the advantage she has derived from the mode and measure of her departure from the Roman church, as completing her superiority over every other, however it may approach her by integrity of motive.

With respect to these, as in the other instances in which so many of her sisters of the Reformation, have gone too wide of the conduct of the Church of Rome, ours, it will be found, has followed decidedly that happy mean, by which we are generally enabled to attain whatever enlightened reason recommends. If not with a clearer knowledge, with a more conscientious feeling of her duty, than the one has shown, with a juster appreciation of the value of religion, as a mean for influencing human conduct, than the

others have evinced, and with a deeper insight into the springs which actuate the human heart; while she has shunned the evils of which the former was intentionally the cause, by her the advantages have been equally secured which the others had in vain endeavoured to embrace.

In the ineffable superiority she acknowledges to belong to things that are eternal, we have seen that she does not forget the relative importance which things that are temporal undoubtedly possess. While she keeps most steadily in view the perfect equality belonging to men as aspirants after the first, we have seen that she is never blind to the distinctions that must subsist among them, having reference to their circumstances as they regard the last. Modifying, as they most essentially must do, the way in which we are so to pass through the one, that the other, finally, may not be lost, those distinctions she has brought studiously and prominently forward to the view, as obviously resting on the principles of our nature, as clearly supported by the word of God. Having shewn their foundation to be placed in reason and in Scrip-

ture, she has studied carefully the means by which religion may most powerfully enforce the duties which those distinctions individually create, as well as such as are incumbent upon all. But having this, so desirable an end, in view, she has not reduced her ministers to a uniformity of rank, having no answering uniformity in society at large. While she so far adapted their situation to the relations of common life, she did not fall into the error incident to the temper and situation of the times, of considering a corresponding difference of external circumstance, in connexion with a general attention to their temporal advantages, to be either foreign to their character as Christian ministers, or prejudicial to the discharge of their official duties.

Throwing prejudice aside, nor suffering the abuse to operate as an argument against the use, in seeking to avoid the evils which had arisen from the ministers of religion, being seduced by a spirit of sordid avarice and corrupt ambition, she placed her chief dependance on that integrity of motive which it is the inevitable tendency of her principles, as those of genuine Christianity, to

inspire. But she deemed, and wisely, that she was co-operating with those principles, that she was giving that integrity its best support, in making their office, as to its temporal advantages, all that could satisfy a rational ambition. She clearly saw the evils which had resulted from the sedulous endeavours of the Church of Rome, to make the office of the priesthood the supreme depository of outward dignity, and wealth, and power; but she saw equally the advantage to the general interests of human nature, to result from her investing it with those attributes, in such manner and degree, as should keep it in a close and intimate communion with everything in which they are legitimately inherent.

But having left it in possession of those necessary qualities; having freed it from the adjuncts requisite in its perversion, to support a system of such complicated fraud, as that to which it had been previously devoted; having modified, where necessary, the parts which she retained; she made her hierarchy what it is, and what it must continue, as long as human nature shall be influenced by the principles which at present re-

gulate its welfare, at once the simplest, and the most powerfully efficacious instrument, for bringing Christian principle to bear upon the heart, and under the happiest forms, which in our varying circumstances, our duties may assume for making Christian influence come out upon the conduct.

Of the provisions that have been made by others, for reaping the inestimable advantages Christianity is able to confer upon mankind, there is none for which some equivalent is not found by her: in the degree of perfection she has given to each, there is scarcely a church by whom she is approached; as to the number and the mode in which those provisions have been combined by her, she leaves the whole of them immeasurably behind.

Of the extent of the advantages which she has thus secured, it will be found that the other churches of the Reformation, have been more or less deprived, from the impossibility of recovering what, in a moment of rashness, they had thrown aside; or because of the advantages in question, being identified with conclusions, and involving principles incapable of amalgamating with the

views, and of co-operating with the systems, which they had hastily, and unadvisedly adopted, without advertg to their distant, though still their certain, and most dangerous results. Of all that have arrogated, of all that have received the name, she is the only church that takes a liberal, an extended, a just, a scriptural view of human nature, and in every aspect which it can present, in every situation into which it may be thrown, that foresees its exigencies and meets its wants. In its general attributes, she never loses sight of what its peculiar circumstances demand, nor in looking to the latter, are the former suffered to escape her view. Severally, and together, as parts, and as a whole, she is equally discriminative of what it may require. She has maturely weighed its circumstances, as they refer both to the present, and a future life. In preparing men to discharge their duties, as they more immediately regard the first, she has taken into account, and by the sanction of religion, she has sought to influence, their domestic, and their social, and their political relations. In estimating the means by which they are to be fitted for en-

tering upon the duties of a higher state, she considers them, as here subjected to the operation of a system, in which prosperity and adversity have each their use; and therefore, that she may in every way assist them in preparing for the hour of death, and for the day of judgment, in all time of their wealth, she is at hand to chasten, while in all time of their tribulation, she is prepared to cheer.

It is thus, that while other churches, labouring under the influence of mistaken conceptions of the Christian system, have fixed their eye upon one portion of society, and even to the essential injury of that, have virtually to it confined their care; she on the contrary, rightly dividing the word of truth, has made a marked distinction betwixt the real principles and views of Revelation, and its temporary circumstances, and figurative language. Avoiding the errors into which they fall, in her care of one, she is not negligent of another's wants, but, as a faithful steward over the manifold grace of God, while she filleth the hungry with good things, the rich she sendeth not empty away.

Looking, therefore, to the purity of her principles; looking to the venerable simplicity of her forms; looking to the gradation of her ministers; looking to the means of influence, which, both as a body and individually, they possess; looking to the provision for their continuing uninterruptedly invested with those means, while we should openly belie the liberality of her spirit, while we should be going in opposition to her recorded declaration, should we assert that with her alone the true light may be found; we should do her less than justice, were we to refrain from saying, that she is the only church that has acted uniformly and consistently with the declaration of those Scriptures which all profess to make the rule of their obedience, that it is a light to enlighten every man that cometh into the world. She alone, acting consistently with this belief, has carefully studied, and also judiciously employed, the means by which its influence may extend to all, undimmed by human prejudice, unobstructed by human passion, a light to every foot, a lamp to every path. She has placed it on a level with the ways of those who are moving in the

highest and the foremost ranks ; she has caused it to illuminate the steps of those whose duties are to be found in the intermediate walks, while none are placed so low, or thrown so back into the shades of life, but that their eye may fall on some, coming from whose precept, and reflected from whose lives, the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, may shine into their hearts ; leaving room to anticipate the happiest results, from the unobstructed influence on principle and conduct, of its elevating doctrines, of its impressive sanctions, of its animating hopes.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE RELATIVE PERFECTION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, AS IT IS VERIFIED BY REFERENCE TO THE PRACTICAL RESULTS.

So far, then, as we are hitherto enabled to determine, by comparison, with those of any other church, there is nothing in their spirit, in their constitution there is nothing, by which they are entitled to a preference over ours. The further, on the contrary, that, as to these, the comparison is followed out, the more will it be found how decidedly the preference is due to her. But before applying this conclusion to the solution of the questions, more immediately affecting the endowment of the Church, as to the aspect in which it is contemplated by many, let what may be denominated her theoretical superiority, be, for a time, excluded from our view.

Leaving, for the moment, out of mind, the number, the perfection of the arrangements she has made for supporting the interests of pure religion,

comparatively with those which have been formed by others, let experience be appealed to as the test by which we may determine the advantage to be derived from copying those countries of which the ecclesiastical establishments have been proposed, in any way, as models for innovation on our own. Let the relative superiority of theirs, with ours, be a question determinable by their relative success; by the amount of virtue they have severally produced; by the permanence they have severally given to its existence, relative to the circumstances under which they have been placed. Let the question of eligibility be judged of by their relative success in moulding beneficially the habits of society, in meliorating generally the circumstances of our nature.

But if such is the standard by which all are to be tried, is ours the Church which shall be found wanting? We would ask the warmest advocates of change, if any country can be pointed out in which the laws are either more wisely or more justly framed, more faithfully administered, or more readily obeyed? Is there a country where the ~~greer~~ ~~less~~ inclination to make their

power be known by its abuse; where, in their conduct towards inferiors, they more carefully avoid whatever may be construed into a wish to trample either on their feelings or their rights? Is there a country, we would ask, where a more rational deference is paid to rank; where it is regarded with a sentiment more equally removed from insolent rudeness, or from slavish fear? Is there a country in which the rich are found more uniformly tender of the welfare of the poor; where the poor are found more uniformly to abstain from looking with invidious feelings to the rich? Is there any country in which a spirit of undeviating integrity enters more thoroughly into general intercourse, in which, through every rank, according to the means of each, there is found less actual profligacy of conduct, a more extensive, a more heartfelt love for the duties, and the decencies, and charities of life? Does there, in a word, exist a country in which every excellence that has its basis upon moral and religious principle, is either carried to a greater height, or appears under a greater multiplicity of forms? When we have found a country with such pre-

dicates as these, we may cease to question the expediency of change; we may admit the possibility of our Church being defective in some necessary point. It will then be difficult to show why she should not be altered by the model of that church, which, in its practical results, has given the world a proof of wiser views, of more efficient powers. But having found that country, which, as compared with ours, religion and morality more thoroughly pervade as actuating principles of public, social, and domestic conduct; and having an actual superiority in these respects, if it can be shewn that this has been no fleeting, temporary attainment; if such superiority has been supported and increased with a greater increase of the circumstances, which, without some unceasing, some energetically counteracting power, must have imbued it with all the vices which are most opposite to the virtues specified or implied in the enumeration we have given;—then is there indeed a case established, when, however mortifying to the proudest of our feelings; when, with a tearing asunder of all our fondest associations as a people,

it becomes us to descend from the lofty station we have hitherto usurped, to stoop from our long imagined dignity as a nation,—and taking that country for a model as to the means with which it has fenced the interests of virtue and religion, to shew ourselves its wise, though humble imitators.

But if the case is the very opposite of what we have supposed; if, in all the attributes we have enumerated, we can see no nation which is superior to us; if they are all in all inferior to ourselves, then we may more than question the validity of the grounds, on which the expediency of imitation rests. But, if we are not merely their superiors at the present time; if looking back upon the past, we can fix our eye upon a period, during which we have been advancing with a steadiness, and yet rapidity of progression, which have brought us forward, until we have taken our station in the front of nations; until we have thrown all of them to a distance, in the length to which we have proceeded in accumulating wealth, and power, and knowledge; in making these subservient to the welfare of society, by the increase

and the improvement of the means which minister to its wants, and add to its enjoyments ;—If this is a period, during which, with a growth of all the means of vice, there has notwithstanding, been a growing purity of morals, extending its influence to our manners, to our amusements, to our literature, to our arts ;—If it is a period, during which our character as a people has been rising more and more, even with the nations, whose envy our virtues have the most awakened, whose jealousy our greatness has alarmed the most ;—then, considering how often in other countries, prosperity and virtue have been found apart, we are certainly to be justified in the inference we draw, that it is not by accident, that they have met in ours ; that it is through no fortuitous concomitance, that with us they have been seen uninterruptedly advancing, with so rapid, yet so firm, so uniform a pace.

But on looking back upon the time which dates the origin of this united progress, we find it in the epoch that also dates the liberation of our church from the errors and enormities of superstition ; which shew

with her present spirit, in her present form. Are we not then justified in the inference we further draw, that she is the common parent, both of our political and our moral greatness, that she is the bond of union, by which, in their advancement, they have been kept so long, so steadily together.

But what is thus so clearly demonstrative of her intrinsic excellence, affords us also, as to her comparative perfection, an evidence approaching to decisive proof. Our absolute superiority to other nations, so commencing, so increasing, so long, and so decidedly supported; a superiority so manifest, in every point where the influence of religion, must necessarily exert a beneficial operation, seems by a fair and just presumption, to mark the absolute superiority of ours, to the ecclesiastical establishments which they maintain.

Without any comparison being directly instituted as to minute details, we might from this be warranted to conclude, that relatively with those of every other church, there is something in her spirit, something in her constitution peculiarly favourable to the advancement of society, and congenial to our nature in its most perfect form.

Something would there, from this, appear to be in her, in others not inherent in the same degree, which fosters the inclination of the human mind to overcome the obstacles that oppose its progress. From this it would appear, that there is something in her attributes exclusively her own, which seconds, while it prompts the efforts of our race to leave behind the innumerable disadvantages belonging to civilization in its lower states; which enables them to gather in the most abundant measure of the happiest of its fruits, only to be found at its maturer stages, without at the same time, reaping of the evils, either physical or moral, which, so frequently, which we might almost say, in every other instance, have been their after, or their connate growth.

But a truth that must come home so nearly with the force of demonstration, to the mind which calmly reflects upon the general circumstances connected with the origin and progress of our astonishing superiority over other nations, will be turned into complete conviction, when, looking back, along with these, we take into our view, the points in which, as we have seen, their respective

churches, as to their spirit or constitution, differ from our own. The more attentively that her various qualities shall be considered in connexion with their inevitable tendency, and with their evident results, the more will it be seen, that our national superiority, connected as are all its attributes, with superiority of religious and of moral worth, has not resulted from the favourable influence of contingent circumstances, but has sprung from causes of which the Church has justly calculated the effects, is the necessary product of the enlargement of her views, and of the relative perfection of her consequent provisions.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE RELATIVE SUPERIORITY AND PERFECTION OF THE CHURCH, AS THEY IMMEDIATELY AFFECT OUR ESTIMATE OF THE EVILS ATTRIBUTED TO THE EXTENT AND FORM OF HER ENDOWMENT.

WHETHER, then, her qualities be theoretically considered, and the accuracy of her views, and soundness of her principles are tried and attested by their practical results, or looking first to the attributes, for which, as a people, we have so remarkably been noted, if we trace them to their origin in the combined integrity and wisdom of her views, it is equally apparent, that so far from its being incumbent upon us, either on expedient or on necessary grounds, to look inward for the purpose of discovering defects, or outward for the means by which we may correct them, that we are on the contrary in possession of that church on which all others should be moulded and reformed. Nothing, indeed, so clearly indicates the depth of prejudice through which this subject

has by many been considered, than the actual probability from the existing circumstances of the world, that this is an event, which, to a great degree, may find its accomplishment at no distant time.

If the human race be destined for progression ; if, generally throughout the world, the aspect of our nature shall beneficially be changed, those who have attended the most closely to its interests, will be the readiest to acknowledge, that, according as its several portions are improved in character and general circumstance, theirs must become proportionally assimilated to ours. They must necessarily approximate to the spirit of society as it exists with us, to our views, our tastes, our habits, and our morals. We find, accordingly, that in every country where the minds of men become awake to the existence of any national defect, that for every model upon which to change, that for every principle by which they may effect it, however remote and unconnected with each other, it is to us they look, as if with one consent. As the means that may enable them to secure their end, it is to our civil and

political institutions they have hitherto exclusively directed their attention. But, since to these they have confined their views, we may account for the almost total failure hitherto attending on the efforts they have made. The national advantages that have chiefly tended to excite their envy, and invite their imitation, may generally seem, or actually are, as to their immediate source, the result of civil and political institutions. But in their great and varied excellence, in their wise, and liberal, and Christian spirit, these institutions are themselves so legitimately the offspring, or in their operation, are so blended with the influence of our ecclesiastical constitution, that of the inestimable advantages the former have conferred, there are few for which the latter may not claim a portion of the praise ; many of them are to be considered even as its direct and necessary fruits.

In their efforts to participate of the benefits in question, it is not easy to conceive, how other nations can come near us in the one, unless they equally approach us in the other. The state of things that has enabled us to secure the advan-

tages by which their attention has been so strongly drawn, is closely dependent on that equality of rights, which presupposes inequality of ranks.

They presuppose a state of things, where the humblest, as to person, is as secure against aggression, where he holds his portion by as sure a tenure as the most opulent and powerful member of the state. But, on the other hand, an order of affairs is equally supposed, where the various attributes of wealth and rank are not only prized as objects of ambition, but to the very utmost limits to which they may be lawfully acquired, are by all acknowledged to be as rationally sought, to be possessed by as just, as indefeasible a right, and therefore to be as innocently enjoyed, as the veriest pittance that accrues from daily toil. It is evidently only under such an order and disposition of society, that there can be that constant increment of human wants, which, in the discovery and formation of the means through which they may be met, give that ceaseless and increasing stimulus to human industry and human talent, which in a manner removes all limit to the accumulation of individual wealth, and therefore

to the developement of national resources ; which opens, as it were, a boundless field for private happiness and for public weal.

But in their ardent aspirations to participate in the advantages we have derived from the principle of subordination, as it is modified with us, it is impossible that other nations can succeed as long as they shall be content to found it merely upon human laws. To give this principle its fullest range, to give permanence and security to the institutions which are connected with it, and essential to its subsistence under its happiest forms, like us they must take care to make it be respected as having its foundation on the laws of God. Effectually to secure well-regulated freedom ; to guard against the evils which must spring from its abuse ; to ensure the advantages arising from the gradations of society in so greatly multiplying the employments of mankind, in adding so variously to the sum of their enjoyments, it must eventually become apparent to those portions of the world which are ripe for calculating the means, as well as for appreciating the end, that the only security is an established church. But

in that momentous struggle of which the termination left mankind the leisure to reflect upon the evils elsewhere exhibited in the structure of society, as also on the means to be employed for their removal, a proof has been exhibited of the comparative inadequacy of other churches, to afford protection from the machinations of the enemies of social order. To the triumph of her principles, to the efficiency of her powers, not only were we ourselves indebted for our safety from the common danger, but from the impulse and direction, which, through her influence on individual character, our church had given our national resources, equally to her, have the various portions of the Christian world been indebted, for whatever of the benefits of social order they may now enjoy. Is it then to anticipate too much from the exercise of human reason, to believe that prejudice must yet so far give way, as to permit the nations to perceive, that for the fuller participation of the advantages attending on our more perfect exemplification of the social system, their chief resource must ultimately be the establishment of a church with attributes like ours.

It must, for their attainment, be a church like ours, which having in view no sinister or unworthy aim, from the progress of opinion, can have nothing to apprehend, and therefore instead of checking the advance of intellect, is a church like ours, that courts and leads to rational inquiry. It must be a church like ours, which with every quality to command attention and secure respect, effectually teaches every rank to moderate their estimate of the circumstances in which they differ, by fixing equally their minds upon those higher blessings, in regard to which the greatest and the least are placed upon a par. Like ours, it must be a church which makes this common hope in every way subservient to the common good, by carefully impressing upon the minds of all, that the attainment of the happiness of a future life, depends on the fulfilment of the duties they reciprocally owe in this ; while, like her, in furthering their efforts to discharge those duties, it must extend to all the model and example of a religious life, as well as the sanction of religious obligation.

But this, her great, and her unequalled excel-

lence, which the more minutely we examine into her qualities, comes out more fully and completely on the view, an excellence which we thus perceive to be also universally, although unconsciously acknowledged, is the test of the absurdity which must belong to those, who in a matter having relation to the cause of this superior efficiency, would eulogize those countries of which the ecclesiastical establishments are more simply framed, and therefore, held to be more economically maintained than ours. Being used in furtherance of a necessary end, if she has more efficient instruments than any of which other churches are possessed, in estimating their relative expense, by as much as they are more efficient, as they are more adapted to the purposes for which they are intended, by so much must we allow their value to be increased, and in the same proportion is the cost diminished. Until a church shall have been found not only less extensively, less liberally endowed, but also rendering to the community equivalent advantages, it is but justice to conclude that the wages are but proportioned to the nature of the work; that the labourer is fully worthy of the hire.

But it is not merely a relative diminution of the burden which it lays on the community, this great and obvious superiority implies. The examples which have been adduced to prove that it is possible to support a church establishment, at an expense inferior to what ours must cause, have uniformly been found in countries which may be equally adduced in proof, that under some shape or another, they have suffered in proportion to the degree wherein they have left their ecclesiastical establishments, without the qualities through which this increased expenditure has been incurred. In like manner, the evils so copiously attributed to the qualities in question, if not in every form, at least in their strongest and most alarming colours, have been borrowed from those countries, where a church, with a constitution outwardly assimilated to ours, but actuated by principles diametrically opposite, produces diametrically opposite effects. They are inferences drawn from countries where there is a church, that, in as far as she has external qualities which resemble those of ours, employs the power and influence they give her, not in preserving, but in

corrupting Christianity ; not in furthering the interests of society, by giving freedom to the use, and a beneficial direction to the powers of human genius, but in breaking the very spring of its improvement, by seeking to crush the spirit of inquiry ; in subverting the foundation, and extirpating the love of civil freedom, that she may cramp, and fetter, and enslave the mind.

But in referring to the means by which our national superiority has been established, a view is opened on the subject, that shews to us at once, the striking injustice which our church has met. She is not the idle and unprofitable weed, impoverishing the soil on which it grows. She is not the parasitical encumbrance which stifles where it clings, and kills what has enabled it to rise. She is not that glutton of the moral world, setting itself to watch the progress of society, that it may fall on enterprise, and arrest improvement ; which sucks the life blood of productive labour, which gorges on our wealth, and eats into the vitals of our power.

Let the subject be considered with the views which suit the most grovelling, the most worldly

mind. Let pecuniary advantage be the principal, the only object in our eye ; let it be a mere affair of profit and of loss ; still the Church is not to be brought in a bankrupt in her fortunes ; to be held an eleemosynary dependant of the state. In adjusting the account, that the balance betwixt them may be fairly struck, we must not give the latter credit for all, of which she is in actual possession. We must consider, and from what her attributes now are, those must be subtracted, which, but for the Church, they never would have been. If there be knowledge, industry, sobriety, integrity ; due subordination, well-regulated freedom, mutual confidence, security ; if there might have been ignorance, and sloth, and profligacy, and fraud ; oppression, turbulence, mutual distrust, uncertainty. If the former, in the unparalleled degree in which they exist with us, are clearly attributable to her superior power of leading to the observance of common, and reciprocal, and peculiar obligation ; to that expansion of intellect, that soundness of view, that steadiness of purpose, which are never to be found, except where uncorrupted Christianity abounds, and which the

qualities of the Church so eminently ensure. Then, by as much as in the one case, there are a field, and instruments, and opportunities for accumulating wealth, favourable beyond what are presented in the other, by so much must we take in justice from the state, in estimating the extent of mutual obligation ; and placing it to the credit of the Church, hold it as a part acquittance of her debt. But with this, let us likewise take into account, that higher value, which she gives to the remaining portion of the public wealth, due it may be said to natural advantages, or otherwise derived from sources over which we may suppose the Church to be without control. Let us, with the former, take into our estimate, the additional value which she lends the last, while, giving to its use the stamp of virtue, and the impress of religion, she makes it more available for our real welfare ; then by an amount which leaves her services remunerated with a sum that ought to satisfy the narrowest and most grovelling in their views, do we lessen the claim that has been brought against her ; if we do not rather shew that she is justly entitled to her full discharge.

But in the same degree that we diminish from the burden which the Church is held to lay on the community at large, do we take from the weight of evils, by which, through her, individual interests have been held to be oppressed. May we not rather say, that as the former is to be found existing only in interested and unfounded declamation, so also that as to everything essentially injurious to private interests, there is not a charge that has been brought against her from which she ought not in fairness to be absolved. Of the property she possesses, there is not an individual member of a single class, who can lay his hand upon the smallest part, and say that it is his, either by acquired, or by hereditary claim; that either by natural, or by legal right, it ought in justice be consigned to him.

Even in that form to which objections have been most strongly urged, to no one do her claims appear as an unheard of, or unauthorized demand. As modifying its value, these have entered as an essential consideration into the transference and possession of every species of our property which is liable to such deduction,

for a period so far beyond the time to which any individual can trace his title of possession, as to remove them infinitely from coming towards any, even as the shadow of an aggression on their rights. On the contrary, as participating in the general prosperity to be traced to that ample field of virtuous, safe, and lucrative exertion, which she has so mainly contributed to open up, there is not a class or member of a class whose worldly circumstances the Church has not ameliorated in every point. There are none whom she has not only rendered happier, in rendering them more enlightened and more moral, but whom, in some shape or another, she has not rendered even richer, than, but for her assistance, they could ever have become. Let us therefore grant, that there are classes of society whose absolute wealth and relative importance in the state would receive a great and instantaneous increase, by an invasion on the general amount of her possessions. Let us admit that there are others that would be freed from inconvenience, by abrogating the form which they in part assume. This may be all, and readily conceded, without touching the general merits of the case.

Waving the manifest injustice of consulting the convenience, of promoting the interests of any portion of the community at the expense of another's clearly-established rights, let it be even granted that the advantage to the former may be as instantaneous and as great as is expected ; must it not be also but of momentary duration ?

Anterior in its origin to that of every other vested right, where is the subtlety that can point out a mode by which the amount or tenure of that property may be infringed, without, at the same time, trenching upon forms, opposing habits, giving a shock to principles, which imply a weakening, if not a simultaneous destruction of the means, by which alone the physical superiority belonging to number and corporeal strength is directed and controlled by moral power. Barring it of every fence, by which it can be adequately protected, whatever be its shape, whatever be its tenure, in whomsoever vested, must not property be left an easy prey to the cupidity and violence which such infringement openly invites ?

Even granting, if we may, that dangers of this


kind may immediately be shunned through the efficiency of our laws, and through the vigilance of those by whom they are administered, the more minutely we examine into the nature and the tendency of the measures which imply infringement on the property of the Church, the more shall we see reason to believe, that however iniquitous as to principle they are, their policy is to be rated even lower than their justice.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES AS THEY AFFECT THE POLICY
OF WEAKENING THE GENERAL INFLUENCE OF THE
CHURCH.

IN establishing the truth of our position, that we have been indebted to the Church for the most felicitous of the circumstances, so long connected with our position as a people, it seems a fair presumption, that we have thereby also ascertained the means that are to enable us at least to render stable the advantages we enjoy, if not the means by which they may be carried even to a greater and more enviable height.

Far as we have already come, there are no appearances from which we may infer that we have yet approached the termination of our course. There is nothing in those appearances which does not rather afford the strongest indication, that in the happiest of its attributes, as well as in the length of its duration, the portion of that course which is as yet before us, may *infinitely*



transcend the portion over which we have already travelled. But as in the one case, there have been dangers through which we have come with safety, fatal as in their consequences they have been to other nations, it seems the part of prudence to consider, that evils may threaten us as we still advance ; that we ought not to throw ourselves without a guide, on the uncertain issues of our future path. Having already profited so eminently of the services of the Church, is there anything we would ask, either in our existing or prospective circumstances, to give us reason to conclude, that having brought us so forward in the path of greatness, we may without her further guidance, continue uninterruptedly in our prosperous career ? On the contrary, in adverting to those circumstances, we shall find that obstacles may by possibility occur, not only to retard, but to arrest our progress ; that to extricate us from the perils to which we are, or may be yet exposed, it is still to the Church that we must look for aid ; that we must seek our safety for the future where we have found it in the past.

In adverting to the sources from which that pe-

culiar happiness we have so long enjoyed, may justly be considered as susceptible of danger, what first attracts our notice, are the attempts which have been made to overthrow the civil institutions of the country, and preliminary to success in these attempts, to root out from among us the belief of Christianity, and the influence of her principles on human conduct.

But the friends of our civil and religious interests, might look with comparative indifference to open infidelity and unmasked sedition, were it not for circumstances which have threatened to prepare a wider field for those who are acknowledged labourers in their cause. Rational and sound as are their views and principles considered as a whole, a portion of our population must be excepted from this praise. Coming as it were from opposite directions, the portion against which exception must be made, in regard to many of the opinions they adopt, are actuated by opposite and discordant views. But differing as they do upon specific points, in behalf of others they make common cause, and against all by whom they are opposed in these, they wage their

warfare under a common name. Assumed as the distinguishing appellation of their body, this name would indicate, that in respect to their having adopted the tenets in which they do agree, they arrogate to themselves the praise of being exclusively Christian in their principles and views. On examining the points in which they so accord, that we may discover in what they make the spirit of Christianity essentially to reside, it is apparent that the members of this heterogeneous body, are at one, only in embracing some of those erroneous impressions of her nature, of which the refutation laid the foundation of the reasonings we have hitherto pursued.

For the existence of these errors, in the nature and extent in which they unhappily prevail among us, we are in some measure indebted to that perversion of the religious principle, which finds its sole delight in subjects of mystical and gloomy contemplation. We may trace them in some measure to the vanity of ignorance, which makes men mistake dissent from the opinions that prevail around them, for the necessary indication of superior wisdom ; opposition to the ordinary con-

duct of their fellows, for the unequivocal demonstration of superior virtue. Another and most obvious mean by which those erroneous conceptions of the nature of Christianity, if not originated, have been spread and deepened, is the temptation they hold out to hypocritical pretenders, in the opportunity they afford them of profiting by the fears and ignorance of others.

Without staying to inquire to which of these respective sources they are chiefly owing, we shall not, in the eye of reason, be accused of giving an overcharged representation of the consequences of the united influence of these several causes, if we say that they have resulted in a system by which time and circumstance are equally confounded.

We shall not be accused, by the unprejudiced, of violating truth, when we assert that the system in which they so result, is one that, for every shadow of evidence on which it rests, is indebted, entirely to a reasoning, if it may so be called, in which, according to the character of those by whom it is supported, Scripture metaphor and Scripture idiom, are either artfully substituted, or

ignorantly mistaken, for Scripture principles and Scripture views. By following this mode, out of that which should inspire the heart with hope and joy in believing, those by whom it is supported, are enabled to draw inferences which fill the unwary mind with gloomy forebodings, vague, uncertain fears.

Viewed though a medium of this discolouring and distorting power, Christianity is seen as if she imbodyed in herself all that is unlovely, and repulsive in its nature. Actuated by the impulse of a blind caprice, rather than on grounds intelligible to reason, or having any reference to moral ends, she is represented as inculcating on her followers, much that is uncharitable in their feelings towards others, in reference to themselves as prescribing all that is ascetically rigid and severe. As a necessary preparation for a future state, she is represented as seeking to obstruct mankind in most of the pursuits which are essentially conducive to the well being of the present. Hostile to whatever has a tendency to give grace, or dignity, or smoothness to our paths, by those who carry this system to its full extent, she is

invariably represented as inimical to science, as warring with the arts and elegancies of life, as scarcely tolerant even of its duties, and bringing its amusements to a level with its crimes.

In pointing out the evils to be apprehended from a view of Christianity, so opposite to what is warranted by truth, it is impossible to be blind to those, which must result from its tendency, to throw discredit on the pursuits that are requisite for attaining a knowledge of the languages in which the principles of Revelation are conveyed ; that are requisite for attaining a knowledge of the circumstances and events, of manners and of customs, relating to the history of individuals and of nations connected with Revelation, as well in its nascent, as in its progressive, and more perfect, state.

In leading to a general ignorance of these, the tendency of this system is evidently to induce an ignorance of much of what is requisite for elucidating the meaning, for supporting the assertions of the sacred penmen. In doing this, it perpetuates and aggravates the evil in which it partly has its source. It adds more and more to those

indistinct and vague conceptions of the views of Revelation, which leave the weak and superstitious to be “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

Leading, generally, to an ignorance of the circumstances of human nature, when destitute of the aid of Revelation, these erroneous impressions of the Christian system tend ultimately, and necessarily to obscure its evidences; to leave mankind, unable to give a reason of the faith that is in them, a prey to the sophistry of infidel misrepresentations.

In leaving men exposed to such misrepresentations, they come in furtherance of an evil to which they otherwise directly tend, in disturbing the harmony of the relations betwixt the several orders of society on which its general welfare is depending. It is an unavoidable consequence of those false conceptions of the Christian system, that the inferior classes obtain from them a false conception of much that is connected with the means, through which, as moral agents, the favour

of the Almighty is made accessible to men. In looking towards this, they are by these induced to attach importance to those external circumstances of fortune over which they are comparatively without control, and proportionally to exclude from due consideration, the conscientious performance of their moral duties, as their external circumstances may affect their shape.

Impressed with a vague belief, that there is something in their station which gives them of itself superior importance in the eye of heaven, they are necessarily led to consider, as disadvantageously situated for participation in its favour, all who, as to worldly circumstances, in the gradations of society, are greatly elevated above themselves. Misapprehending the duties of the latter, misinterpreting their motives, wherever they find the conduct, habits, and pursuits of their superiors, differing, as they must often do, essentially from their own, eagerly and indiscriminately they place it to the score of vice and irreligion. From looking to their superiors, in this uncharitable light, the steps are sure and easy to those invidious feelings, which prepare their minds for

being worked on by the machinations of those insidious men, who are ever on the watch to profit of everything that may favour the accomplishment of their ends, in subverting the foundations of established institutions.

While their natural effect is thus to lead the lower portions of society to indulge those feelings towards others, which ultimately go to thwart the plans of providence, and to disturb the order which is marked out by its arrangements, their tendency is, directly, to increase the disadvantages under which the former labour. Checking the kindly feelings, they intercept the kindly offices of the rich; who, from the consequences of those erroneous views, as they operate on the mind and conduct of their inferiors, are compelled to look to them with dislike or fear.

But in the influence they necessarily exert on the essential interests of the higher classes, must these errors be as unfavourable, as they are prejudicial to the real welfare of the lower. Confounding the enjoyments with the vices of mankind, interdicting the harmless pleasures of society, and thus giving it the appearance of being

unfavourable in its influence on the happiness of life, their inevitable tendency is to destroy the characteristic of Christianity as an easy yoke. They add to it a weight, which holds out a strong and an unnecessary inducement for questioning the authority by which it is imposed. They constrain them to associate with the idea of religion, something irreconcilable with what are the natural attributes of their station, something that is opposite to the habits, incompatible with the enjoyments to which their circumstances necessarily lead. The effect of these austere and rigid views, is, therefore, to give all above a certain rank, a tendency to forego their efforts, to unite what are so capable of union, and to throw themselves at once into the arms of vice.

But, independent of their tendency to lead to evils of this immediate and more striking kind, dangers are attendant on the spreading of these views, against which it is the more important that we be strictly on our guard, because they are at once more extensively injurious to the interests of society, and approach it under a less alarming form.

It is a reasoning evidently acted on, by many who would be far from advocating, to the full extent, the cause of those whose views of Christian obligation we impugn, that in prescribing to mankind a rule of life, it is safe to narrow, as far as possible, the sphere of their indulgence, since, fix them where you may, they will naturally overstep the boundaries defined. Than this, however, it will appear upon reflection, that there cannot be a greater, a more dangerous error ; one that is more subversive of all the principles of moral obligation.

By nothing, undoubtedly, has the influence of her system been more effectually obstructed, than by the indistinct conceptions to which this necessarily leads, as to the nature of the ends which Christianity has in view. By directing their attention in an undue degree to what are comparatively but of trivial moment, the minds of men must be proportionally abstracted from the primary objects of belief and practice.

To lead them to conceive that it is their duty to submit to rules which neither reason nor Revelation warrants, is to place them under restraints

which they will be continually seeking, until they find pretexts for breaking through. The tendency therefore of these unauthorized restrictions, is evidently to superinduce a habit of compromising with conscience in what men cannot but perceive to be less important matters, which must end in the belief that it is possible to compound with heaven for greater and more flagrant violations of their duty. It is their tendency to destroy all sincerity of principle, and integrity of conduct; to make the form of godliness be substituted for its power; personal austerity for moral worth.

But let us suppose that without being immediately productive of such effects, that gloomy and superstitious spirit, to which those errors naturally lead, spreading through society, should extend itself to the classes, which ought to be the least obnoxious to its power.


The evil is delayed only to appear under another, a more destructive form. For a time, and to their full extent, those errors may produce their primary effects in repressing that cheerfulness and buoyancy of mind, which are natural to man when

his external circumstances are in a prosperous state, and he is otherwise exempt from sources of disquiet. They may for a time succeed in making him reject as sinful, those fruits of wealth and leisure, those enjoyments and pursuits in which, but for this misapprehension of their nature, that cheerfulness and buoyancy would find their natural outlet and expression. But however long their influence may confine itself to this, the event must ultimately prove what in every instance has been found to be the case, when accident or art opposes the laws and purposes of nature.

In narrowing its channel beyond a certain limit, or in seeking permanently to obstruct its course, we oppose to it a barrier which the stream will ultimately pass, with consequences that are destructive in proportion to the period during which that barrier has restrained its force.

Let us imagine for a moment, that the gloomy spirit which has already passed upon a part, should advance as it has threatened on society at large. Let us suppose that it should breathe throughout the whole, that chilling influence by which it is enabled, repressing the natural expres-

sion of the feelings, to freeze “ the genial current of the soul,” and check the flow of rational enjoyment. All may, for a time, be smooth and motionless upon the surface of society, but passions and principles will be at work beneath accumulating strength, until they overcome the power by which they are resisted. In the convulsion that must then ensue, along with the restrictions by which those principles have been unnaturally confined, the salutary barriers must be also overthrown, by which it is the aim of reason and religion, not to obstruct, but to direct their course.



CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE DANGERS ATTENDANT ON THE GROWTH OF SUPERSTITION, AS THEY DEMONSTRATE OUR DEPENDANCE ON THE SPIRIT OF RELIGION AS IT EMANATES FROM THE CHURCH.

IN illustration of the dangers to be incurred by the more extended diffusion of those erroneous views of Christian obligation, which so many have evinced a tendency to adopt, it will be found that almost all the periods which have been most remarkable for laxity of morals, and depravity of conduct, have been as remarkably preceded by periods that have been noted for austerity of manners.

It was after men had been looking for perfection in the desert and the cave, when, as the most effectual means by which they could secure the favour of the Almighty, they had been eagerly embracing whatever was most calculated to macerate the body or to mortify the spirit, that the Arabian impostor found them ready for whatever

could give latitude to criminal indulgence; that his train was thronged with candidates eager to avail themselves of the boundless license of his unholy faith.

Nothing but the reaction produced by the undue repression of those principles and feelings, which in certain directions, and under certain forms, are incapable of being separated from human nature, can account for a success so rapid, and apparently so wonderful as his. Thus alone can we explain, why a superstition so puerile, so ferocious, so immoral in its nature, should have made its way, or found a single votary, where the light of the glorious gospel of Christ had ever been received, to illuminate, and humanize, and purify the mind. It was through the necessary operation of these mistaken views, that so large a portion of the world has ever since been lost entirely to the name of Christianity, because through these it had previously been lost to everything essentially connected with her nature.

But this, although the most extensive, is not the only melancholy instance of the destructive consequences which have ensued from these, to

the essential interests of virtue and religion. Engrafted among the errors of the papal superstition, it was these which led to the belief of the moral efficacy of pilgrimages, of vigils, fastings, scourgings, vows of celibacy, and other attributes of monkish virtue. Extending their influence throughout society at large, the same erroneous notions are to be considered not merely as the forerunners, but in a great measure, as the cause of that unbounded profligacy and dissoluteness of habit, which had overspread the Christian world, previous to its partial emancipation from the thralldom under which it had so long been held. Intimately associated with almost all the grosser portions of the papal superstition, these must be considered as having contributed greatly to the noxious influence which threatened, but for the striking interposition of Almighty power, to extinguish the light it had so long obscured, and to leave the world in that state of moral and religious darkness from which the Gospel had relieved mankind.

The same connexion, as to time, might be traced betwixt the other periods, when this ascetic virtue has been carried to its height, and those in

which, as to everything conformable to the dictates of reason and revelation, morality, and religion, have gone entirely to decay. Such was also, and most signally the case with us, when its influence having paralyzed for a time, and overpowered the Church, it generated at last a spirit of corruption, with which, upon the recovery of her strength, she was all but found incompetent to struggle. From everything therefore, we have reason to assume that they are intimately connected as effect and cause ; that the one is to be considered as the invariable, the necessary consequent of the other.

To us it may be approaching in a different form, but still the danger is essentially the same. While the influence of these mistaken views, is extending upwards through society, those members of the higher, and more affluent of its classes, who are infected by their irrational and gloomy spirit, may, as long as they are few in number, be gratified by the knowledge, that they are looked up to as the heads and leaders of a sect. While pride and vanity are soothed by this, they may find sufficient to compensate for the sacrifice they

make, in the rejection of the enjoyments and dereliction of the pursuits, which are incident and appropriate to the station which they hold. But let us imagine that these gloomy and mistaken views, should obtain a footing generally in those classes which are the depositaries of influence and wealth, then the distinction ceases, which had previously ministered to vanity and pride. But when this artificial stimulus is withdrawn, not only must those austerities relax with every evil consequence which has elsewhere been experienced, but with consequences still more destructive of the interests of virtue and religion, affording the fainter hope of their ever recovering the position they shall have lost with us, because it must take place where, beyond whatever has been exemplified in other countries, or in other times, there must be a greater accumulation of all the materials and means of vice.

Against these fanatical and gloomy views, against the various evils with which they threaten to assail us, we have to look for safety to the Church alone ; but happily, to her we look with the certainty of our finding means, by which, ac-

cording to the nature of the danger they present, all may be either directly counteracted or eventually removed.

From the means which she employs for enlisting on the side, and training in the service of Christianity, all that is acute in human genius, and profound in human learning, it is impossible that infidelity can be enabled premanently to misrepresent her doctrines, or that any of her evidences can be successfully attacked. Against the dangers to be incurred by the tendency of those views to subvert the established order of society, she brings the appropriate means of safety in making the principle of subordination so prominent a feature in what may be considered as her more immediate province. While in those departments of society, where she has more a moral than an absolute dominion, where it is more her part to sway than to command, she fixes its influence on the minds of men, by assigning it a rank among the principles of morals; by making a rational obedience to its dictates, an essential part of their religious education. It is, however, to the whole character of the religious impres-

sions which her views, and general constitution are so fitted to convey, from their being so admirably adapted to explain, and to exemplify the nature of Christianity as a reasonable service, that we are chiefly to look for safety, not only against its tendency to open a field for those who are actually disseminating infidelity and sedition, but against every other danger incident to the spreading of this fanatical delusion.

In the grave and solemn, yet rational and cheering exposition of her doctrines, in the strict and upright, but liberal interpretation which the Church has put upon her precepts, there is a justice done to Christianity which tends to secure for her that favourable reception which she seldom fails to meet, when prejudice is averted, and she is seen in her natural shape and in her real colours. Few, comparatively, can be disposed to renounce her authority, or to cavil at her claims, when they see her represented not as capriciously sporting with the feelings of mankind, not as teaching them to dread in everything by which those feelings are addressed, in every earthly object of desire, a poisoned lure which tempts them to de-

struction ; but represented, as by the Church she is, in that degree which is compatible with a probationary state, as at once the author and the bond of union betwixt human happiness and human virtue, as giving in the best and purest of the enjoyments of the present, the earnest of the blessedness of the life which is to come.

It is thus, that in opposition to the danger to be incurred by prejudices, which go to undermine all candour and ingenuousness of spirit, by compelling men to resort to casuistic subterfuges and jesuitical distinctions, that they may reconcile their conscience with what are either innocent, indifferent, or laudable pursuits, the Church comes in aid of virtue, by the clear and marked distinctions which she draws. She supports a manly openness and integrity of character, by impressing on the mind, that as to all the enjoyments of the present life, whenever by nature or by circumstance they may partake of vice, it is only trifling with the dignity of heaven to expect, by outward ceremonies, by rigid doctrines, by enthusiastic feelings, to obviate the guilt and danger of pursuit ; that whenever they are not hurtful or

immoral, we may not only follow them without remorse, but with feelings of gratitude to the author of all good, who, within those limits, and when we use as not abusing, has given us all things richly to enjoy.

While the Church has thus left open to mankind, the pleasures and pursuits which are from their nature unsusceptible of abuse, and those which, being in some measure indifferent, are innocent or laudable, when they are followed only in a due degree, by extending in every way the sphere of their enjoyments, as far as reason and Revelation sanction, she comes in aid of virtue, in opposition to the tendency of an irrational superstition. She diminishes the risk, while she diminishes the temptation of their being led to wander where reason and Revelation would interdict their straying. It is thus that she peculiarly meets our exigencies as a people in opposition to the tendency of this rigid spirit, by preventing opulence and leisure from being at last identified with frivolity of manners, and with profligacy of morals. It is only, as the Church has studiously endeavoured to effect, by keeping wide

the channel of legitimate indulgence, by giving men the free enjoyment of innocent, refined, ennobling pleasures, that we can be enabled to carry off, as it were, the exuberance of our wealth ; that the current of our prosperity can be hindered from overflowing, in consequences fatal alike to happiness and to virtue, to the temporal and eternal interests of mankind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE POSSIBILITY OF SUPPORTING THE GENERAL INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH BY MEANS DIFFERENT FROM THOSE WHICH HAVE BEEN HITHERTO EMPLOYED, MORE ESPECIALLY AS CONNECTED WITH THE NATURE OF HER ENDOWMENT.

So far, then, from anything appearing in our present circumstances, to authorize the conclusion that we are safely to dispense with the assistance of the Church, everything in these gives reason for believing that we ought to cling to her, not merely through a grateful feeling of the favours that are past, but from a sense of our increased dependance on her aid. But while our past experience, as well as our present and our future exigencies, unite in pointing to this general dependance, they equally forbid our looking forward to a time when she may be enabled to effect her object and to secure our interests, by means different from those which she has hitherto employed.

If, so far as the theory of our duties is involved, it be necessary to possess a perfect code of sound morality and pure religion, as it is to be deduced from Scripture, in conformity with the dictates of enlightened reason for securing the temporal interests of mankind, we must abide as firmly by the standards of the Church. If it be necessary to secure a test by which we may be enabled accurately to distinguish faith from superstition, piety from enthusiasm, zeal from rashness, an ignorant presumption from that perfect hope which casteth out fear, and Christian charity from indifference to everything which pertains to Christian principle, it is still by her standards that we are strictly to abide. We must abide by these as they are combined together, as they are illustrated and enforced by her judicious selections from the volume of inspiration.

But the body of our population throughout all their ranks, must continue from their necessary avocations, to be always without the time, and without the opportunity, and without the education, and without the habits and the frame of mind, which may enable them, dispensing with

assistance, to consult her standards, so as personally to reap their use in elucidating the principles of religion and of morals. Being, further, from these causes, without the means of ascertaining how completely the truths of natural and revealed religion are authenticated and illustrated by historical research, without additional assistance, must the body of mankind be always left in ignorance of much that is essential both to faith and practice.

We see, therefore, that the Almighty, in accommodating the Revelation which he has given them, to the exigencies of his creatures, has assigned it qualities, has connected with it circumstances, which must at all times make it requisite for the mass of men, that some having a more perfect acquaintance with its nature, should guide them to the knowledge and the practice of their duty. But since, in giving his open sanction to the appointment of these teachers, he has withdrawn from them all intuitive perception of those things which are yet requisite to be known, before they can be qualified to serve as guides to others; then has he clearly shewn that this perception of those

circumstances is, at all times, to be acquired by natural and by ordinary means ; that it is through the avenues of human learning they are to arrive at true knowledge and understanding of his word.

Having thus made the requisite fitness for their office an object of slow attainment, and in respect to it having beset the path to excellence with difficulties, similar to those which are necessary to be surpassed in reaching forward to perfection in all the more elevated pursuits of human life, we have reason to conclude, that where there are similar difficulties opposed, it is equally intended that there should be similar means, by which those difficulties may be overcome. It is not consistent with the circumstances of human nature, nor with the ordinary course and providence of God, that in that pursuit where the greatest of all evils must follow the relaxation of his efforts, that man should be ever left without the prospect of immediate good, to stimulate his exertions while it animates his hopes. But the temporal advantages which encourage their perseverance in the painful and laborious task of preparation, which is necessary to give them a knowledge of the duties of their

office, and a fitness to act the part which it assigns them, are the very means which alone can give them entrance to the fields where they may usefully employ their powers, and which furnish them with the instruments wherewith they are to work. To cut them off, therefore, from the prospect and enjoyment of those advantages in their due degree, is clearly to oppose the will of God ; to thwart his plans where it concerns the dearest interests of mankind, that his arrangements should be followed to their complete extent.

If we would look forward with unfeigned desire to the fulfilment of the Church's earnest prayer, that God would give to all his people increase of grace to hear meekly his word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the spirit, we must take care that we do not trench upon the means which are indispensable for her obtaining teachers on whom they may rely with confidence, as guides to all that a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health.

For the attainment of this end, we must look forward to those teachers being continued in such circumstances of external fortune, as to enable

them to command the deference which is the natural result of wealth and power. Those circumstances must still continue to be such, as to enable them so fully to exemplify that admirable exposition which the Church has given us of our Christian duties, that men may feel themselves constrained by the example of her teachers, to adopt her views, and to imbibe her feelings, to breathe her spirit, and obey her precepts.

But acknowledging that there is a point beneath which it cannot be allowed to fall, who for a moment, laying prejudice aside, will venture to assert that the provision of our clergy, as to the stimulus which it holds out for individual exertion, as to the means which it affords for enabling them to exemplify the practical influence of religion, or to permit their mingling in society under circumstances that may give to them their proper weight, is above that due amount at which the interests of the community require it to be fixed.

Should any, willing to throw prejudice aside, be still disposed to entertain a doubt, let them reflect on the extent of mental cultivation, requisite to enable the ministers of religion to master

those branches, which are to be considered as the more immediate and appropriate preparation for their official duties. Let them also look to that intimate acquaintance with secular knowledge, in its various forms, which may enable them to keep up with the general intellectual progress, and by the union of divine with human learning, to give that bias to the last which may keep it always on the side of virtue and religion.

Keeping still in view the laborious nature of the preparation which is thus implied, let them look to the temporal advantages which others are enabled to attain, through channels of far less difficult access. Apart from those narrow prejudices, which confound the use with the abuse of wealth, let them reflect upon the change of habits and opinions, which, by its general increase and diffusion, it has effected throughout the body of society, the multifarious purposes to which it is applied, in purchasing what are misnamed the luxuries of life, when they are in truth, the natural fruits and application of our wealth. If truly unprejudiced, they will then acknowledge that the provision which even the best appointed of our

clergy have received, holds nothing out in prospect, and gives nothing in possession, beyond that fair, that liberal supply of the legitimate objects of ambition and desire, which makes it certain that their office shall be sought by candidates that are worthy of admission ; which makes it certain that when admitted, they shall have those instruments of usefulness and means of influence which the circumstances of society require them to possess. Taking the whole of the case into mature consideration, if indeed unprejudiced, they will be ready to admit, that with any diminution of the amount of that provision, it is impossible to ensure to the present members of the priesthood, as a body, successors so trained, so fitted for the office of instruction and example, so fearlessly, but, what is of such paramount importance, at the same time so rationally conscientious in its discharge.

But the evils to be dreaded from that office being filled by teachers of an opposite description, are not to be apprehended solely from a direct invasion of the property of the Church, by any intentional diminution of its amount. If not im-

mediately accompanying, they are all among the consequences which must follow in the train of innovation, whatever be the shape it outwardly assumes.

In the hope of our securing the advantages to be derived from an enlightened, conscientious, independent priesthood, without the disadvantages which are supposed to accompany the system through which we now enjoy them, let us make the body of our clergy look to the present depositaries of their wealth, altering the form, while we seek to uphold the value of their claims. In doing this, we may for a time avoid, but sooner or later, we must embrace the evil which we seek to shun.

The ground on which this innovation can alone proceed, is the concession of a principle which is as dangerous in its consequences, as in its admission, it is unauthorized by reason, unsupported by experience. To make this innovation, is to acknowledge the presence of an evil, which does not exist. It is to make that appear a burdensome, unauthorized exaction, which, as far as it is possible for reason, law, and custom to unite in

conferring an exclusive and proprietary right, is, undoubtedly, one of the most just and equitable kind.

But this virtual acknowledgment of somewhat in the operation of those claims, which is oppressive and unjust, is a boon that will not be lost on those to whom it is conceded. The spirit which has prompted them to claim an abolition of its form, will impel them soon to clamour for another and more important change. The arguments which have been hitherto employed to shew that in its present mode, the endowment of our parochial clergy is repressive of industry, and inimical to improvement, will at least with equal plausibility be adduced against a periodical valuation and adjustment of their rights.

Few also of those that are immediately interested to bring about this change, will be found capable, and of those who may be able, fewer will be willing, to distinguish betwixt that, which, in its natural mode of operation, is acknowledged to be an intolerable evil, and that which is, in principle, confessed to be unjust.

If the former be once conceded, we shall then

have awakened a spirit of cupidity, we shall have given an impulse and direction to its efforts, through which its real object will be speedily accomplished. Whatever care we may employ to prevent the innovation from being carried to its utmost limits, we cannot stop, if we at all affect the nature of the tenure by which their property has hitherto been held. We may rest assured that there is but a single step, betwixt the temporary and the perpetual conversion of their rights. But with the permanent existence of an independent, upright, and efficient clergy, and such an alteration on the mode of their endowment, an absolute incompatibility will speedily be found.

As far as such a measure is reconcilable with justice, we may desire to act conformably with her dictates. In making such conversion it may even be our wish to place the most liberal interpretation on the value of their claims. We may calculate their exigencies, and seek to provide for them, even on the widest and most extensive scale. But when we think our purpose has been thoroughly attained, how long can we depend

upon those exigencies continuing the same; that they shall be adequately answered by the calculations we have made. The wealth of one age becomes the poverty of the next. Repeatedly has it happened in the past, nor can we say how often it may again occur, that the cottage has been adorned by that which the palace had been proud to own. That which has been prized as the refined enjoyment, or even blamed as a luxurious indulgence of the rich, by the natural course of circumstances, has been converted into the simple accommodation of the poor. Unless, therefore, you can set bounds to the discoveries of science; unless you can number the combinations of art; unless you can place a limit to the fertility of nature, and arresting by these means the genius of improvement, say thus far, and thus far only shalt thou go; in one period of society you never can define, what shall be the wants, what shall be the necessaries, what shall be the temperate enjoyments of the next;—far less, were it possible to foretell what portion of your wealth at any given time, shall be at another, equal to their purchase. Let the period at which we would

enumerate the former, at which we give a fixed denomination to the last, be a period when society is rapidly progressive, and inevitably do we fix a time when the provision of the Church, which shall be regulated by it, must become totally inadequate to every necessary purpose.

CHAPTER XIX.

OF THE PROPOSITIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED FOR SUPPORTING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE PRIESTHOOD AS A BODY, BY EQUALIZING THE DISTRIBUTION OF ITS PRESENT FUNDS, OR BY CONSTITUTING ITS PROVISION A PORTION OF THE GENERAL EXPENDITURE OF THE STATE.

IN admitting the expediency of innovating so far upon the manner of providing for the body of the priesthood, as to enforce a periodical adjustment of its claims, it is evident, on reflection, that we concede a principle, which brings it speedily to that fixed, unalterable amount, which is inconsistent with the efficiency of its individual members. But are the evils to be incurred by our impairing the efficiency of those who are to keep up the influence of religion and morality, upon the body of the people, to be avoided or diminished, by invading the revenues of the dignitaries of the Church, to keep the income of the former at its due amount? In doing this, it will be found, that while we mar the beauty of what is amongst the fairest, and most amiable of her features, we

are hastening the very evil we would seek to counteract. It is, fortunately, a case which never can occur, because their interests are throughout inseparably united ; but let us suppose an instance, in which, exclusively of the other, we have to make our choice betwixt the power of extending and deepening the influence of religion, through the higher, or through the lower orders of society. It is a question which admits not of a moment's hesitation. Let us be totally indifferent to the best, to the most valuable interests of the first ; let us give the last the overwhelming weight of that importance, which is due to the preponderance of number, where all are individually equal in the sight of God ; yet if not in place, at least in point of time, the former have the prior claim upon our care.

The force and current of example, comes from the higher to the lower, not from the lower to the higher, ranks. If the former be virtuous in their habits and enlightened in their views, although circumstances may for a time combine to deteriorate the character or the conduct of the others, in the spirit of imitation there is a renovating

principle, which must struggle successfully with the influence of corruption, until vice and irreligion are finally eradicated from the body of the state. Never, on the other hand, can the influence of corruption spread with such malignant, such resistless power, as when it comes down upon the body of society, accelerated by the example of the rich and great. It is therefore of the first and of the last importance, that these in every state should be morally principled and religiously impressed. But that this end may be effectually secured, it ought never to be forgotten, that we must still consult the principles which are common to our nature, as to the general plan on which we must proceed, and for its modified application, that we must take into our view the peculiar circumstances of the higher ranks. While we seek to give them the benefit of that example which we extend to others, let it still be kept in mind, that we must have the provision of a portion of our clergy of an amount so large, that the affluent and the great may see the influence of moral principle exhibited on a scale, proportioned to the importance and the number of their duties.

But that the dictates of moral principle, in regard to them, may be fully, may be authoritatively sanctioned and supported, it is indispensably required, that in her higher ministers, religion should appear with that splendour of outward circumstance, with that dignified, if not commanding aspect, which may produce on those who are more immediately the objects on whom their example and their influence are to take effect, the same pre-disposition to obey her dictates, as, in the relative difference of their situation, is requisite to secure for her the favourable attention, of those who move in an inferior sphere.

It is idle, therefore, where it is not worse, to represent the revenues of those who fill the higher offices of the Church, as either disproportioned to the services they render, or capable of being diminished with advantage to the state. It cannot with justice be maintained that they are greater than the exigencies of the case require, unless it can be shewn, that any of these ministers are so extravagantly gifted, so preposterously endowed, that every portion of society is kept below their sphere. That this position may be

with truth supported, it must be proved, that in regard to wealth, and all that influence which wealth commands, they are so high above the highest of their fellow subjects, that there are none, who, associating with them upon equality of terms, may be influenced by their habits, may catch from them the tone of manners and of morals. It must be shewn that there are none, who by their example, and their influence may be taught, how integrity of character and purity of conduct, are to be preserved mid the temptations incident to wealth ; how the refinements of society may be enjoyed apart from its pernicious pleasures ; how the pride of station is to be ennobled and illustrated by the dignity of virtue, and the haughtiness which might otherwise be inseparable from rank, to be tempered by the mildness of the Gospel spirit:

Should society possess a single class so greatly elevated above the others, that none of the ministers of religion can approach it with the qualifications necessary for producing the effects we have described, it matters little, or it matters nothing, how few are the individuals of whom it is com-

posed. A step is taken from that beautiful gradation, in which the Church endeavours so to arrange her ministers, that from the palace to the cottage, a Christian example may extend to every part. It is the breaking of a link in that all-powerful chain, with which, from the meanest of his subjects, to the sovereign on the throne, she has as skilfully, as she has benevolently sought, to bind, throughout, the members of society, to their individual interests, and to the common good, by the mutual ties of Christian obligation.

Beyond this sphere, not merely of useful, but of necessary, influence, no member of the hierarchy has been placed. Not one of its members, therefore, could be deprived of any portion of what the Church assigns him, without diminishing her authority in the very point, where it is of most importance that it should be great ; without weakening her defences, where, if vice and irreligion are not most likely to break in, their entrance must be most fatal to the cause of virtue, most rapidly destructive of the public weal.

But are the evils, to be otherwise apprehended

from innovating on the mode in which the body of the priesthood are endowed, more likely to be avoided by the adoption of that plan, which, abrogating their rights as these at present stand, would constitute them public and stipendiary servants. Without, again, adverting to its manifest injustice, without adverting further to the danger which it brings by shaking the foundation of every private right, we should wish to try it by its individual merits, as adapted to the end which it professes to have in view. It is a plan which is the more deserving of attention, because it seems, at first, to carry in itself a remedy for the dangers, which attend on innovation under other forms. By this, however, it will still be found, that we but change the mode in which it is to come, without in any degree averting the reality of the danger. It is a plan which bears along with it the evils to be incurred, as we have seen, by leaving the teachers of religion dependant on individual influence or caprice.

To the influence, to the caprice, of individuals would they still be subject, depending for the amount of their allowance on the varying opinion

of those, who, for the time, might chance to sway the counsels of the state. If their provision be made a part of the general expenditure of the country, with no distinctive character to the fund out of which it is derived, it must be in constant danger of being turned aside, at least in part, for meeting, what may be esteemed, the more pressing exigencies of the public service. That, in this respect, it would be exposed neither to an imaginary, nor a trivial danger, is evident, when we reflect, that of this necessity, they are to be the judges, who may be disposed to underrate the advantage of applying it to its proper destination, when it may be made subservient to promote the measures, in favour of which they may be unduly biased, when the success of these is either identified with the support of their authority, or is to be held conclusive of the wisdom of their counsels.

But allowing that danger of this nature, to any great extent, is to be warded from the Church, by the vigilance of that body, of which it would then become the duty to appoint the sum, as well as to protect the application of her funds, still, with-

out arresting its approach, do we but change the shape and the direction of the evil.

Let it be conceded, that by this means, the provision of her ministers shall be made equal to what they now enjoy ; yet, since there still are individuals, although collectively, who have the power to vary its amount, it ceases, on the instant that this change is made, to invest them with some of the most essential of the qualifications of their office. By this we still effectually destroy, that peculiarity of circumstance by which they are now so fitted, for operating beneficially upon human nature. We destroy their essential characteristics, as a body separated from the rest of the community, yet intimately allied to every class, and having their interests identified with the common good, for the support of which they have many duties to prescribe to all, which we may rest secure they will conceal from none, while, owing no man anything, they are without temptation to defer, either to the power of one, or to the passions of another.

But whatever might be fixed on as a provision adequate to the end in view, and however ade-

quate when it should so be fixed, we have seen that from the natural progress of society, this is a character it cannot long retain. Interference would be continually necessary, to keep their provision at the desirable amount, while it may also be considered absolutely certain, that it could not be exerted always when required. The measures of great deliberative bodies, when, as a whole, they are actuated by fair intentions, will generally be found conformable with reason. There are, however, questions, with regard to which nothing can be more uncertain, than the time when their decision shall be given. But the present is a case, in which to delay, or even to deliberate, were to defeat the object which should be held in view, and to lose for ever the opportunity of acting. The propriety of adding to the amount of the provision of the clergy, is a question, which, we are assured, would never be debated, before the provision had actually ceased to be sufficient for its end. On the contrary, the evil would creep gradually upon us, and only when it has assumed a marked and an alarming form, when our clergy should perceptibly have

fallen from their station in society, when, by a necessary consequence, the influence of religion had perceptibly declined, would her friends be enabled, with any prospect of success, to make it a subject of deliberation in our public councils. But let this time of deliberation be at last arrived. When the question shall have been considered in all possible directions; when the opposition shall have been silenced, of those who are openly hostile to religion, of those who can see nothing to be valuable which comes to them in the shape of a pecuniary loss; when the intrigues shall have been counteracted, and the sophistry exposed, by which they shall have endeavoured to obscure the subject, then, but not till then, may we expect the question to be affirmatively decided.

But by the time this victory of truth and reason shall have been achieved, it will be useless to the cause in which they are engaged. The various attributes which give importance in society, shall then have so far outgrown the number and degree, in which the stationary amount of their allowance shall have kept them stationary in the ministers of religion, that the evil shall have out-

grown all prospect of amendment. Those ministers must then so far have lost their importance in the public estimation, and from the public eye the advantage of their example must have been so long withdrawn, that it would be hopeless to expect, that any favourable change upon their after circumstances, shall be able to compensate for the interruption of their influence on opinion and on morals.

Waving, therefore, all idea of applying to the providing for the others, what has hitherto, with such happy consequences, been appropriated to the endowment of the superior clergy, we must equally relinquish the belief, that the general principle may advantageously be changed, on which our priesthood, as a body, are endowed.

Leaving the former as it at present stands, if we would have a provision for the latter, adequate to every useful end, it must be one consisting of a fund that is as indefinite in its amount, as the exigencies are unknown, for which it must provide. It must be a fund, which, meeting those exigencies to a due extent, is so independent of individual control, that it can be affected, neither

by individual interest, nor individual caprice. It must be a fund so completely separated from the revenue of the public, that it cannot be diverted from its proper object, through every presumed-necessity of state ; at the same time, in its origin, it must be so perfectly connected, so intimately blended with the sources of our wealth, that they whom it is destined to support, may continue, in every case, as well as at every time, to rise upon the tide of general prosperity. It is thus, and thus alone, that every change, which, through the increase of that prosperity, is superinduced upon the circumstances of the community at large, is to be met by a corresponding increase of the provision of the priesthood, meeting the corresponding change upon the circumstances of its individual members, which is necessary to secure to them their proper rank and station in society, their proper qualifications, and their proper powers.

CHAPTER XX.

ON THE FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE IMPOSSIBILITY
OF INTERFERING WITH THE ENDOWMENT, CONSIST-
ENTLY WITH PERPETUATING THE SERVICES, OF THE
CHURCH.

WERE it connected with subjects of less serious import, we should feel inclined to say, that nothing could be conceived more worthy of derision, than the proposals which have been made to innovate on the Church, in any of the points to which we have been directing our attention, when truly and sincerely urged in the belief, that change may be effected, consistently with our continuing to reap the advantages she now confers. In a subject so near to everything which is sacred to us as Christians, which is dear to us as men, of a belief so contrary to reason, so opposite to the clearest lessons of experience, it may be truly said, that nothing can be conceived so lamentably absurd. If our previous reasoning is correct, and neither in premises nor conclusions do we believe that it

can with justice be impugned, it will be found that these are not accessories merely, but very part and parcel of the Church. They harmonize with her proportions, they are essential to her strength. They enter deeply into her character; they go far to constitute her claim, to be considered, in principle and in form, as the nearest approximation, which the world has seen, to the spirit and constitution of a universal church. It is these which give her that catholicism, which consists not in the unauthorized and arrogant assumption of an exclusive right to deal salvation to the human race, but a catholicism of that truer and more amiable kind, which consists in holding the opinion, and acting in complete accordance with the belief, that the grace of God hath appeared unto all men, bringing salvation; which sees, which appreciates, and strictly guards the means, by which its blessings may be extended throughout every rank, sent down uninterruptedly through every age.

Attributes like those, of which the utility is called in question by the projected innovations, we have found to be implied in the abstract idea

of an efficient church. That in their several forms, as they exist in ours, they have at once conduced to the advancement, and have been conservative of our every interest, experience has borne a testimony, ample, not only as to the time, but also as to the circumstances in which they have been tried. But, if without their aid, the Church could never have brought us to that height of moral and intellectual grandeur, on which, to be truly great, temporal prosperity must be raised and fixed, far less were it possible that she could retain us at that height, if we impair the foundations on which the efficiency of her system rests. In a country, which feels the value, and which, in every form, acknowledges the legitimate influence of wealth ;—In a country, where the political and civil institutions, where the manners and the habits, and the feelings of society, are as happily, as they are essentially, moulded on inequality of ranks ;—In a country, that has set out upon a progress of improvement, which, unless impeded by its own imprudence, must defy imagination to assign to it a bound ;—In a country which has been, is, or may yet further be,

the theatre of a struggle, on the one hand to seduce the human mind from allegiance to the authority both of God and man, on the other, to deprive it of all just and useful freedom, by subjecting it to the trammels of a degrading superstition ;—In a country which is thus circumstanced, it may with safety be affirmed, that morality and religion, obedience to the authority of human laws, respect to those which are indeed divine, could never be maintained by any church in circumstances materially remote from those of ours,—with revenues less ample, or differently distributed, or otherwise secured.

Forming, as they do, the necessary parts of one enlightened, comprehensive whole, it is comparatively a matter but of trivial moment, through which of them innovation shall be suffered to come in. So far from there being any of these points in which the Church may beneficially admit of change, there is not one, in which innovation can be harmless merely, none, where it must not be positively, and permanently, and irremediably, injurious.

Interfere with the amount, or with the mode

of the provision of her priesthood, by which she seeks to fix its lowest sum, so that all may be ensured respectability of station; by which, as the gradations of society require, through that what may be characterized as fair and liberal, the amount of their endowment rises, until, as to revenue and dignity, and influence in society, there are some of its members, whom she approaches almost to a princely rank;—Destroy that self-adjusting principle, by which, without the opposition or delay so fatal in their consequences to the interests of virtue, their endowment as a body, is always found proportioned to their exigencies, and keeps them advancing in the general career;—Innovate in all, or any of these points, and we have the commencement of an era, when the ministers of the altar, having no longer their proper place, no longer their proper power, shall in vain be faithful, shall in vain be diligent, in the discharge of duty. But this, is only the beginning of the evils that must ensue, as the prelude of a time, when their office, being, for a period, filled by those of whom it is no longer worthy, shall have those for their successors, who,

even degraded as it must become, shall no longer be worthy of the office which they hold. It is the prelude of a time, when the Church, as to some of the more prominent of her features, may outwardly and nominally remain the same, while really and internally, she is completely changed.

Having interrupted the channel of communication, in the destruction of those natural and outward means, through which the Almighty has so clearly shown, that his secret and supernatural influence is intended to be conveyed, a period must inevitably commence, when we still may have our bishops and our curates, but these no longer such, that we can possibly expect, that either upon them, or through them, on the congregations which are committed to their charge, he will pour down the healthful spirit of his grace. A period shall commence, when the ministers of religion, having neither the knowledge, nor the love, of duty, neither the power, nor the inclination, to obey it, to avoid the evils of a precarious and dependant state, shall either openly pander to the vices of mankind, or place their trust, in deepening the influence of that gloomy

superstition, which, sooner or later, must break up in open vice and irreligion. In either of these ways, we equally perceive that the destruction of everything essential to her character as a church, must follow innovation on the mode of her provision. Innovate where we may, and as to all her great and useful qualities, as to all that is pure and energetic in her nature, her every attribute is completely changed. From the elevated and commanding station which she at present holds, whence the innumerable benefits she confers, are fully and equally and uninterruptedly dispensed, we bring her down to one, where, she ceases, immediately, to be of use to many, where, ultimately, she can be profitable to none. We take the candle from the candlestick, where it giveth light unto all that are in the house, that we may hide it under a bushel.

But, in thus changing the circumstances and character of our church, we are laying the foundation of a corresponding change, on everything which is connected with our circumstances and character as a people. Innovate on the former, in any of the points where it has been proposed,

and proceed we as we may, we weaken at the time, eventually we break the ties, by which the various attributes of general prosperity and moral greatness, in number and degree so far beyond what ever have been elsewhere separately witnessed, have been in us so wonderfully, we may almost say miraculously joined.

CHAPTER XXI.

OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH HAVE A TENDENCY TO MISLEAD
THE MIND, IN ESTIMATING THE DANGER TO BE ANTICI-
PATED FROM INNOVATING IN THE POINTS IN QUESTION.

IN looking into the subject, even with the slightest portion of attention, there can be none who coincide not in the general accuracy of our previous views, in asserting the necessity of obviating degeneracy of private morals, if we would give growth and permanence to public welfare. But, concurring, so far, in our general conclusions, there may be some who question the extent to which they have been carried. Some may conceive that we have given an over-coloured, an exaggerated picture, of the consequences to be apprehended from those measures which we would equally deprecate under every form.

There are circumstances by which they may be so far misled as to believe, that neither to our religious and moral character as a people, nor, consequently, to those temporal interests which

are dependant on it, is the danger to be incurred from innovation in those points, so great and imminent as we have wished it to appear.

But, however paradoxical it may seem when stated, it is true in fact, that the very excellence of the Church, that the efficiency which results from the purity of her principles and the enlightened nature of her views, subserved and answered by the peculiar qualities of her outward constitution, is productive of effects which come between us and the view of that extent of evil, by which the subversion of this union must be followed. The beneficial consequences her attributes produce, obstruct the clear perception of that indissoluble concatenation of effect and cause, through which the injury unavoidably to be produced by innovation on her form, must lead inevitably to the extinction of her spirit.

Among those who either have departed from her pale, or never have acknowledged the authority of the Church, there are many to be found, who, as to the general principles of religion and of morals, approach the soundness and the purity of her views. There are among them many, who,

though infinitely removed from her in both of these respects, walk nearly by the conduct which her principles inspire. On this acknowledged truth, some who, both as to faith and practice, admit the purity which she upholds, have felt themselves disposed to build an expectation, that this is a purity which may be equally maintained, without reference to the means by which the Church supports it. They are willing to believe that although the changes which have been suggested on these means, should even issue in the destruction of her external fabric, that her actuating principles may continue to operate with unabated vigour; that the spirit may survive the dissolution of the frame. This however is an error, of which the source is as apparent, as the hopes are fallacious which they found upon it.

When there is neither weakness of understanding, nor depravity of heart, the force of habit on the one hand, on the other the strong, though unconscious tendency to defer to the general tone and feeling of society, whenever these are virtuous and correct, will counteract the influence of much that is erroneous in matters of belief; they will,

to a great degree, prevent religious error from being productive of its natural effects upon conduct. To this force of habit, to this influence of opinion, coming in aid of the principles of reason and the better feelings of our nature, in restraining those who otherwise might deviate from the dictates of religion, do they, principally, look, who acknowledging the importance of her general aim, are yet disposed to underrate the means, through which it is successfully accomplished by the Church.

It will be found however, that so far from militating against their value, as necessary for the support of genuine religion, that we are thus enabled to obtain another view of the importance of the means which she employs. We are thereby led to trace her influence, where we might not otherwise have known it to exist. Yet, as the source of all by which society at large is made effectually to take the tone and colour of religion, so as to feel its happiest and most powerful influence; whatever be the effects this influence produces upon them who are situate beyond her bounds; if it leads to rational and

moral conduct, when the errors of their creed would naturally cause us to anticipate the reverse, to the Church alone must it in justice be ascribed. Neither can it be made matter of dispute, that much of what is actually sound in their religious knowledge and belief, has been drawn directly from the standards of her faith. Much of this has been retained in a pure and uncorrupted state, merely by their being enabled to profit of those masterly elucidations and defences of the general evidences and truths of revelation, which could have alone proceeded from that happy union of genius, learning, and integrity, with the opportunities and means she has so happily combined in those, whom she is continually sending forth to advocate its cause. In all of this, we see how far, even they who are generally considered to be beyond her influence, are truly and happily affected by her power. In so far as religion is to these a light which leads to a conduct beneficial either to themselves or others, whether it comes directly from her standards and her teachers, or is reflected from the general surface of society, those who would so pride them in believing that

they are able to dispense with the assistance of the Church, are chiefly to be considered as walking by a light which emanates from her.

Nor is it thus alone that we may trace the influence of the Church where it is only on reflection that we perceive it to extend, while coming in aid of better principles and better feelings, she thus, in many and most important points, is enabled to bring into the way of truth, such as have erred and are deceived in others. There are points to which it reaches with effects still more important to the public good, but in regard to which, society is still less accustomed to acknowledge the obligation which it owes the Church, from its requiring a yet stronger effort of abstraction to discern its presence, but where, on due consideration, her influence is still distinctly to be seen.

The effect so truly beneficial to society at large, and yet so seldom duly recognised, is the extent of actual evil she prevents, through the restraining influence she continues to exert on those, who, abjuring, themselves, allegiance to the Church, endeavour, from the impulse of self-interested

motives, to make themselves the instruments of seducing others, from the uncorrupt simplicity of her faith and practice.

To the degree in which they are enabled to abuse the influence they obtain, there is a limit placed, in the integrity, the wisdom, and the purity of the Church.

In the unmeasured rancour of the hostility which men of this description are uniformly found to bear against her, in the general and indiscriminating invective which they are accustomed to indulge, there is a loud and ample testimony borne to the real extent in which they feel her power.

Whatever may be the motives, therefore, through which obedience to her authority is openly refused, it is evident that there are, and can be none, with the knowledge of her qualities, or within the view of their effects, by whom she is not virtually, although but partially obeyed. Fear with some, with others the reverence which truth inspires, even where prejudice obstructs its force, invariably and universally secure to her a portion of that deference and submission, which, through

vanity, or ignorance, or superstition, or hypocrisy, they would refuse to pay.

But while she prompts to what is good, while she restrains from what is evil, so far beyond the sphere to which her influence is usually considered to extend, we see the proof of the assertion we have made, that the very excellence of the Church, that the efficiency which results from the extent and combination of the qualities she possesses, has a tendency to blind us to the certainty of the danger which must follow innovation, either on the intrinsic nature of her individual attributes, or on the mode in which they have been hitherto combined.

While we possess her standards as to faith and practice; while we have these standards explained, inculcated, exemplified by ministers like hers; while uniting the knowledge, with the love, of truth, these ministers shew it forth, illustrated by the most valuable of the results of human learning, enforced by a chaste, a manly, and convincing eloquence, recommended by the advantages which attend the union of the dignity of outward circumstance, with the attributes of a

blameless and a useful life, it is evident that they who are of the contrary part, must be unable or ashamed to deviate so far from truth and duty, as either interest or inclination prompts. While, therefore, we have those various means of influence working so powerfully, so beneficially together, producing their natural effect upon the public mind, keeping it in a sound and healthy state, there can be nothing in the existing circumstances of society, to give us an adequate impression of the evils, in which their loss is unavoidably to issue. Where we at present stand, we must be infinitely removed from seeing how far it is possible for human weakness to be misled by human craft. At present there can be nothing so approaching them in nature and extent, as to give us a visible representation of the features which our circumstances must exhibit, in the remoter stages of united intellectual and moral aberration.

But, notwithstanding all these powerful means of influence to moderate their force, and to restrain their inroads, hypocrisy and superstition have been seen proceeding to a length of folly, to

an impious excess, which are shocking to the feelings, and insulting to the better judgment of mankind. What, then, may we not with reason apprehend, should all those moral barriers be removed, and, by a consequence that must inevitably follow, in the very points where superstition and hypocrisy have hitherto been stayed, should they meet with instruments to facilitate their entrance ; for adversaries able and determined to resist, should they meet with powerful and with firm allies, to secure them undisputed occupation of the field. While purity and wisdom, and efficiency continue to be uninterruptedly the attributes of the Church, no portion of the community can either fully experience the influence of religious error, or be able to display its consequences to the full extent in which it may be felt. But let the Church herself be ignorant, inefficient, and corrupt, and in which of the principles of our common nature, or in which of our peculiar features as a people, shall our security be found, against religious error being experienced universally in the strongest manner, against its consequences being exemplified in their worst of forms. “ The light

of the body is the eye, if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."

Should there ever be a period, when the Church, or that which outwardly and nominally for a time shall represent her, is possessed of qualities so diametrically opposite to those she now so happily exhibits, as opposite to those which constitute them now, must be the features by which our religious character, as a people, shall also for a time continue represented. Then shall there be verified throughout our population, what was foretold of others, as seen by the prophetic eye of the apostle, and as his graphic pen describes. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

But when we have reached the times of which these shall be the features and characteristic signs, let us be well assured that we are verging fast on those, when all respect and veneration for religion

being lost through the unutterable absurdities, the unbearable austerities which hyprocrisy shall have inculcated, and superstition practised, in her name, every trace of her authority shall vanish from among us, and a reckless infidelity shall occupy the void, with the poison of its heartless and demoralizing influence, to bear through every portion of society, the agents of destruction and the elements of decay.

Should our country be ever doomed to see herself deprived of the advantage she has so long enjoyed, in the wise and upright, and independent priesthood of a truly Scriptural and enlightened church, the value of the blessings she has thence derived, the cheapness of the rate at which she has secured them, shall receive a strong, a fearful confirmation. According to the height to which, by them, we shall have previously been raised; when these shall be removed, must be the rapidity of our descent; the utterness of the ruin that shall wait upon our fall. Our wealth, our literature, our sciences, our arts; all the accumulated adjuncts of prosperity, which hitherto, so far from being unfavourable to religion and morality, have con-

tributed to the growth and nourishment of both, when the barriers are removed by which they have been kept within their proper channels, by which directed to their proper ends, shall go all to swell a torrent of corruption that shall sap the foundation, and subvert the structure, as well of our civil, as of our moral greatness. Whatever be the attributes, in which, as individuals, our happiness consists; whatever be the qualities, on which, as a nation, we have placed our pride; "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," all must be overwhelmed, all be swept away.

But in the nature of the evils which are identified with innovation under every form; in the amount of good, of which she has been in the past, of which, in the future, she must be still the source consistently with the preservation of the integrity of her arrangements, as they are evidently depending on the integrity of her rights, let it be still remembered that we have the only

fair, the only true criterion for determining the existence or the nature of the evils, which have ever been attributed to the endowment of the Church. Let it be conceded that there is a sense in which, through this, individual industry may be said to be repressed; that there is consequently a sense in which the Church may be acknowledged to be actually repressive of the public progress. Even then are we without a reason of complaint, since she merely prevents us from advancing so rapidly in the career of national prosperity, as to leave religion and morality behind. In doing this, she but retards, that she may steady, our advance. She carries us forward to a point which we could never reach, but for her preventing that undue acceleration of our progress, which, leading to the exhaustion of our moral energies, must not only arrest us in our onward course, but render us unable to overcome the otherwise inevitable tendency, to decline from the point at which we have arrived.

In comparison of the advantages, which, through this, the Church has been enabled to confer, the

evils that have been conjured out of the inconveniences in any way essentially belonging to her endowment, assume their real shape, are seen in their real colours, if we may not rather say that they vanish in utter nothingness, both as to number and extent. Real or imaginary, whatever be the inconveniences, whatever be the evils that have been attributed to this, let them be all admitted, increased, and multiplied a hundred fold, let us once acknowledge that there can be no permanent separation betwixt public prosperity and private virtue; and immediately it follows, by unavoidable conclusion, that all proposals for their remedy by the means suggested, are founded upon views which are as narrow in policy, as they are in principle unjust.

Passing from the question how far the property invested in the Church, is hers by right inherent and divine, or if she holds it by prescription merely, waving the danger to be apprehended from interfering with those claims which time has hallowed, with a sacredness beyond what it has given to any others that are merely human;— Since in their several forms they constitute a part

of it, and are essential to a system by which we have seen that the principles of true and genuine religion are brought out at once into the busiest hours of human life, and home to its most private and domestic scenes, with a certainty and effect which are neither to be anticipated from the theory of others, nor have ever been exemplified in their practical results;—Since, through the co-operative instrumentality of these, in a manner and degree which the world has never, elsewhere, even separately witnessed, integrity of principle and purity of conduct, a regard to social and to moral duty, have been united, in our instance, with the highest attributes of national prosperity, and the most refined enjoyments growing out of the exuberance of private wealth;—Since a principle moreover is involved in them, than which, with all the light that reason and experience have thrown upon the subject, it cannot be perceived, that any more certain, more efficient means can be devised, by which the opinions and the habits of mankind may be permanently, as well as beneficially and extensively impressed;—Since, as connected with its several relations, such are the qualities in-

dubitably inherent, in the provisions that are connected with the endowment of the Church, then ought we with reverence to approach her rights. If we concede them not the highest origin which it is possible to assign, the open Revelation of the will of God, we ought at least to grant those rights that innate sacredness of character, which in the eye of reason must belong to everything essentially conducive to the temporal and eternal interests of mankind,—a sacredness, through which, all who are actuated by respect for either, should unite to guard them from the approach of violation.

CHAPTER XXII.

OF THE VIEWS PRECEDING, AS THEY MAY INFLUENCE THE
CONDUCT, WHICH, BY MANY, IS RESPECTIVELY PURSUED
TOWARDS THE CHURCH.

To shew that evils of the nature stated, must result from all attempts to interfere with the ecclesiastical establishment of the country, is to support a truth on which many have been acting from mature conviction, while loudly and strenuously advocating the measures, from which such consequences may be with certainty deduced. There is a love of notoriety, a morbid appetite for fame, which finds its highest gratification where it can wantonly destroy what the wise and virtuous most highly prize. To satisfy the cravings of this inordinate ambition, many would accelerate her ruin, as necessarily involving the destruction of the elements, both of private happiness and of public good. There are many, whose hostility to the Church is caused by the clear perception of the fidelity and success, with which, in furthering its

religious, she guards the civil interests of the state. To reach the hopes which they have founded on the destruction of the last, they think, with justice, that it is to the destruction of the first they must be indebted for success. While it is therefore through the Church alone, that they expect successfully to assail the state, we cannot be surprised, that to effect an innovation on the points in question, their efforts should have been so long and so incessantly directed, as the only means through which they can expect, effectually to weaken and destroy the Church.

Some are undoubtedly looking forward to her overthrow, as the removal of the power which hinders them from gathering to the full extent, the fruits of that abundant harvest, which a profligate hypocrisy never fails to reap, where the credulity of superstitious ignorance abounds.

From the unhappy influence, which, through their artful misrepresentations, the former are enabled to exert on intellectual weakness, or through the unfortunate prejudices of a narrow education, many are unable to associate evil, with anything coming in the shape of injury to a church, which,

by the lustre of its qualities, and its superior claim upon the public favour, throws into the shade some sect or name, of which the aggrandizement, identified with the gratification of their self-importance, is the ruling wish and passion of their hearts. In those whom we enumerate, there is a body of opponents, with whom argument and remonstrance must be equally unavailing. Every representation of the amount of evil which must follow their success, is to hold out proportionally cogent reasons, for redoubling the efforts they are entreated to forego.

With motives as depraved; perhaps more truly mean, than those which actuate any of the classes we have here particularized, there is another which is seen advancing to the Church, incited merely by the hope of sharing in her spoil. In this there may be many, so bent on the attainment of the object in their view, that from the means of its accomplishment, and its immediate consequences to their pecuniary interests, it is impossible that their attention can be so thoroughly detached, as to be fixed with steadiness upon its ultimate effects. Among them, however, there

may still be some, actuated by motives equally corrupt, who, approaching to the Church with sacrilegious hands, are deaf to the claims of justice, where the rights of individuals may become betwixt them and the hope of gain; whose ears are closed against the voice of truth, when pleading for the religious interests of mankind.

But whatever their contempt for justice or religion, where they thwart their views of avarice or ambition, having minds not wholly unamenable to reason, these may be led to pause in their career, when they are called on to reflect, that in going against the Church, they go equally against the objects, which to further, is the aim and business of their lives. They may be led to pause, when they are called on to reflect, how trivial must be acknowledged the amount of gain, which, adding for a moment to the sum of their possessions, is obtained by the destruction of everything essential to the maintenance of the principles, which alone secure them the enjoyment of the whole. They may be led to pause and to forego their efforts, when they see reason to be convinced, that, should immediate danger to them-

selves be shunned, there is a certainty if success should crown their efforts, of its being ultimately subversive of the interests of their posterity, whose aggrandizement is perhaps the only object which lies beyond their more immediately personal and selfish views.

It is therefore that we are not left without a hope, that the view of the subject which we have endeavoured to present, may be productive of advantage, in leading some of the most determined of her enemies, to perceive the manner in which their interests are affected by a question, in regard to which, they have so uniformly been forsaken by that proverbial wisdom, which a selfish feeling usually inspires. But our expectation that it may lead to good, is founded chiefly on the hope, that our efforts may contribute to remove the errors of those who are far from being worthy to be ranked with them, whose motives are to be considered as justly deserving of the severest reprobation.

There are many to be found, whose general principles and general conduct would lead us to anticipate a different result, who mingle in the train,

and swell the cry of those, who, in their opposition to the Church, are actuated by the worst and basest views. They acknowledge that the temporal, are dependant on the religious, interests of mankind. They are not wholly indisposed to bear their testimony to the general success with which the Church, while she protects the last, has given advancement and security to the first. With a degree of inconsistency, however, for which it might seem not easy to account, they labour to forward the designs of those by whom that dependance is not recognised, of those by whom her conservatory influence is denied, and of those who seek to strip her of her power, that our religious interests, being deprived of her support, may no longer continue an obstacle to their wishes, by protecting the temporal interests of the state, which it is their undoubted object, often their avowed intention, to destroy. But, difficult as it may at first appear, it is not impossible to trace the cause of this unnatural alliance, betwixt those who are avowedly inimical to the Church, and those, who, in many respects, are not destitute of pretensions to be deemed her friends. We may

trace it partly to the bias, which, without the utmost care to guard against its influence, self-interest is but too apt to give to the judgment even of the well disposed. Through this they are sometimes led to act a part, which they themselves would be the readiest to condemn, could they suspect the spring and motive of their conduct. With some, however, and as in charity we are bound to hope, with far the greater part, of those who advocate a cause, which, but for something to mislead their judgment, their feelings and their principles would equally condemn, the motive by which they have been thus misled, is one that has its origin in what are diametrically opposite to selfish views. Theirs is a conduct, which, however dangerous in its consequences, originates more in accident than in design, or so far as they are blamable for its nature, which is more allied to weakness than to vice.

From causes, which either cannot be foreseen, or when foreseen, of which the consequences cannot always be averted, occasionally it happens that the stream of our prosperity is turned aside from some of its customary channels ; portions of

our population are for a time deprived of the share of its advantages which they usually enjoy. Of these conjunctures, as might naturally be expected, the enemies of the Church are eager to avail themselves, as affording opportunities, favourable for adding to the number of her opponents. It is then that they reiterate their efforts to effect their object, and to destroy her influence, by subverting the foundations of her outward constitution. It is then that they endeavour to inflame the public mind, either by representing the amount or manner of her endowment, as the origin of the calamities for which a remedy is sought, or by pointing out their abolition, as affording ample means, at once for answering the existing exigencies, and for giving that additional impulse to the general prosperity, which shall obviate the danger of its being hereafter met by similar obstructions. That on such occasions, they should succeed in gaining over those who are suffering directly, under the operation of these adverse circumstances, cannot be matter of surprise, while the pressure of the evils under which they lie, disposes them to be but little scrupulous, as to the means which may hold

out the prospect of relief. But it is not among those alone, who are directly suffering from their influence, that these times of partial difficulty enable the enemies of the Church, to succeed in gaining proselytes to their cause. They are then but too successful among those, who, being themselves exempted from immediate participation in the disadvantages under which others of the community may for the time be labouring, are the less disposed to distrust the principle on which they act, while prompted by sympathy for such as are.

But that with principles like theirs, they should thus range them with the bitterest and most malignant of her enemies, affords the strongest illustration which it is possible to give, of the evils to be apprehended from integrity of motive, when it is not regulated by enlightened views. Led away by the misrepresentations of hollow pretenders to patriotic zeal, by the exaggerated statements of those who are interested in injuring the Church, they run hastily into the belief that duty calls on them to join against her, in defence of private and of public good. As champions warring in

behalf of these, they rush with blind and indiscriminating zeal, against everything which the designing are accustomed to represent, as an abuse and imperfection, and encroachment on her part.

Without questioning the motives of those with whom they find themselves allied, they give them all the credit of their name, they lend them all their strength, while seeking to overthrow those portions of her fabric which have thus been made obnoxious to their displeasure. But the evils which result from such being, even temporarily, ranked with her assailants, infinitely transcend whatever could be apprehended from the uninterrupted efforts of the others, whose sinister designs it serves to cover, increasing the danger while it lulls suspicion. Influencing the circles where their individual respectability is known and felt, the vague assertions and the general invective, which would have fallen harmless from the thoroughly unprincipled, from those who have a palpable inducement to deceive, come to many with the force of truth, when they are found proceeding from the lips of those, who, from their general character, are to be supposed above the

wish, while they are comparatively without a motive, to mislead.

It must therefore be an object of the first importance, to break the bonds of this unnatural alliance betwixt those who are endeavouring to undermine the Church, that they may weaken and overthrow the interests she protects, and those, whose feelings towards her, as far as they approach a hostile nature, proceed entirely from anxiety to maintain the interests of which she is in truth the pillar and support. But all that can be requisite for converting those blind and rash assailants into equally determined but judicious friends, must be to have their minds awakened to the conviction, how completely, even to its minutest points, she has her cause identified with that, which they themselves are labouring to destroy, through ill directed efforts to defend. That this identification may be fully recognised, all that can be requisite is, that the subject should be placed before them in the light of truth ; that they should view it with a steady and unjaundiced eye.

They cannot so examine it, without perceiving the strongest proof of what, as a general and

vague impression, has already been in some degree familiar to their minds, that as to everything essential to the interests of our nature, considered in relation to the present life, there is nothing which possesses either a real or a lasting value, that does not rest upon religion as its base. They will equally perceive the demonstration of a truth, not altogether unknown, nor wholly unacknowledged, but never perhaps admitted to its full extent, that in our peculiar circumstances, as to every support it gives, or can give, to our temporal interests, religion rests entirely on the Church. But a truth, which, on such examination, shall come home to them with a force and clearness which must excite their wonder, that any mist of prejudice should have so long concealed it from their view, is, that for every support the Church can give religion, in that rational, unaltered, unperverted form, on which alone our temporal interests can securely rest, she stands herself indebted for her strength, solely to those portions of her external fabric, against which they have been combating with all the blindness, all the pertinacity, of mistaken zeal.

Looking towards them under a different aspect from that which prejudice has previously permitted, they will see her by those attributes, giving extension and stability to the various interests, in behalf of which they have supposed her to be oppugned. In the nature of the influence which these enable her to exert on the general tone and habits of society, they will find her silently, but surely, operating that improvement of its general circumstances, in which alone is to be found a certain and an ample remedy, for the temporary suspension of the welfare and prosperity of individual classes; a remedy, which they have so erroneously been taught to look for, in subverting the foundations of her outward constitution.

But in discovering these truths, let them do justice to themselves, in doing justice to the Church. Let them not only cease to be the dupes of artful misrepresentation, but appreciating the motives, let them openly acknowledge the fallacy of the arguments by which they had been seduced, to join the standard of her determined enemies. Let them not only feel, but candidly confess, that in the points in which they

had considered her as thwarting and opposing individual interests, and the public good, they have had the weakness to be deceived, either by allegations glaringly untrue, or by accidental evils for which she could not be made amenable in the eye of reason. Let them confess that partial, trivial inconveniences, and from the circumstances of human nature inseparable from the operation of the principles on which alone the efficiency of an ecclesiastical establishment can securely rest, have been exaggerated into grievous and intolerable burdens. These trivial inconveniences, these temporary evils, let it be candidly acknowledged; they have sought to remedy by means which, carried to consummation, must at once have crushed the germ of everything essential either to public or to private interests; of everything which is either estimable as a quality of moral worth, or valuable as an attribute of external fortune; individually felicitous, or nationally great.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON THE PRIVILEGES RESERVED FOR MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH, AS JUSTIFIED BY REFERENCE TO THE PREVIOUS VIEWS.

IN looking back upon the subjects which have passed before our view, it will be seen that our conclusions, with the proofs on which they rest, constitute a virtual answer to a question, which circumstances are combining daily, to render one of a deeper and more momentous import. How far are we to justify the conduct of the state, for the decided preference she has given the Church, in the exclusive privileges she has conferred upon its members, and the consequent disabilities to which others are subjected? This is a question, evidently permitting of its being considered under a two-fold aspect. It may be considered as a question that is immediately connected with the subject of religion; it may be considered as a question where a point of temporal policy is involved. To the mistaken light in which it has

been viewed under the former aspect, is undoubtedly to be ascribed much of the misconception, of which, under the latter, it has been equally the source.

In the hope of being enabled to contribute towards the removal of those erroneous impressions connected with it, in its relation to the other, it will first be necessary that we should advert to those, which have relation to it as a religious question. In doing this, it is our wish to render every justice to the cause we would oppose. It is on this account that we would set out with the express admission, that while there are points in Revelation where it is directly criminal to entertain a doubt, there are others which have been left in an obscurity of that nature and degree, which, according as men are favourably situated for the discovery of the truth, may leave a reasonable ground for difference of opinion. As serving in many ways to keep the attention of mankind steadily directed towards the subject of religion; as leading to the minute investigation of its truths and bearings, we may admit that the divisions to which this difference of opinion necessarily leads,

may have been intended to act a most important part, in contributing to the more perfect development of the Christian system.

That these divisions are capable of being attended by beneficial consequences, may be acknowledged to be demonstrated by reference to the comparative state of morals and religion, in the several countries, wherein they are respectively permitted or repressed. As prescient of their effects as well as of their existence, we may consider it as granted, that those emphatic words in which the Saviour of the world forewarned his followers to be upon their guard with those who should be saying lo there, or lo here, as pointing out the limits within which the boundaries of his kingdom were confined, had reference to these divisions in his church, as well as to the dangers with which his hearers were about to be beset. As present to his eye, we may conclude that those divisions were not wholly beyond the compass of his meaning; that we place no forced interpretation on his language, if we consider it as intended to unite his followers of all denominations, in those bonds of mutual charity to be

found in the belief that there is neither church, nor name, to which salvation is exclusively confined.

But fully as we may be justified in making these concessions, there has been recently a tendency to make them justify conclusions, not more unwarranted by the nature of the premises on which they are supposed to rest, than they are dangerous from the consequences to which they further tend. From various causes, which, on this important subject, have been contributing to mislead the public mind, and to obscure the nature of the questions it involves, there has recently been a tendency with many to believe, that since the attainment of the most important of the objects Christianity has in view, is a thing compatible with so many peculiarities and diversities of tenet and of form, it must be a matter of nearly absolute indifference, to what community of Christians we individually belong. From this, the step is easy to the further proposition, of which the diffusion has been co-extensive with the other, that the state is, without a right, to make inquiry into the opinions of individuals on religious subjects;

that all support or preference exclusively extended towards one communion, is uncalled for in itself; that in reference to others it is partial and unjust, and a palpable infringement on the rights of conscience.

In exposing the fallacy of these conclusions, it is necessary to remark, that although beneficial consequences may, upon the whole, result from separations in the Christian Church, there are certain limitations with which this truth must necessarily be taken. There is no principle, however beneficial in its general operation, which may not, through the folly of some, or through the guilt of others, be perverted from its purpose, and made liable to abuse. But even in the belief that under any aspect, the divisions which are subsisting in the Christian world, shall be ultimately conducive to the more perfect developement of Christian truth, there is an implied acknowledgment that these should have their limits both in number and extent. In the belief that Christianity is a system of which the tendency and influence are meant to be progressive, the certainty is implied, that the grounds of difference which now separate its ad-

herents, are to diminish, as they approach one common point, at which distinctions are to cease ; where all shall coalesce.

But long before the consummation of these views, and while the moral necessity for the existence of these separations exists in fullest force, it is evident that one portion of the Christian body, may have neared, or may have reached, the standard of perfection as to discipline and doctrine, while the others are at distances indefinitely removed. That Christian truth, of which the cordial reception and belief are to be considered as essential to the attainment of the more momentous objects of our common faith, by one of the sections of the Christian world, may be kept so pure and so remote from error, and the inferences from that truth may so judiciously be drawn, that it can scarcely fail of being equally beneficial, as it regards both temporal and spiritual welfare. By others of these sections, while the same truth enters essentially as a portion of their creed, it may be so confounded and mixed up with error, that it may mislead in cases where it is of the utmost moment that it should en-

lighten. It may be so implicated in the trammels of superstition and of fraud, that it may retard the progress it was meant to further. There are, we know, communities, which are still to be considered as essential portions of the Christian body, with whom the principles of Christianity are so perverted and disguised, that while for the reasons stated, we must grant the systems they adopt to be adequate, as means for leading to the happiness of a future state, yet, in regard to their effects upon the welfare of the present, it is secured by sacrifices which Christianity has never called on them to offer. While, therefore, there exists this striking difference in the facilities they respectively afford for attaining the objects which religion has in view, it is far from being matter of indifference to what communion men may be attached. Whether they may be looking to individual welfare, or to the general furtherance of the cause of truth, it is equally a duty, incumbent upon those who have the power and opportunity of judging, to hold fast by that, which, on trying all by reason and by Scripture, they cannot hesitate to believe the best.

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This decided preference and support of one, so far as individuals are concerned, is perfectly consistent with that Christian charity, which, in the unity of the Christian Church, acknowledges the existence of many separate portions. It is perfectly consistent with that charity which admits the presence of a saving grace, wherever, with the reception of the vital doctrines of the Gospel, however commingled and debased with error, there is to be found the answer of a good conscience out of faith unfeigned.

It is evident, however, that there must be drawn a line of marked distinction betwixt this charitable construction of the principles and conduct of our fellow men, and that real indifference to everything essential to the Christian faith, which makes an open boast, to venerate alike all systems and all forms.

But it is equally apparent that a line of similar distinction must be drawn betwixt that spurious liberality of view, which would deprive the state of all right of cognizance of the religious opinions of its individual members, and that due respect, which, on every principle, both of justice and ex-

pedience, the rights of conscience are entitled to demand. She is certainly without a claim to enter into the privacy of domestic life, and to exert an inquisitorial power for ascertaining the opinions which are not obtruded on the public eye. Far less has she a right, by subjecting dissidents to what are with fairness to be considered penal consequences, to enforce conformity with the standard which she herself approves. But where opposite opinions are openly professed and acted on, the state has then the most undoubted right, in comparing them together, to give a preference to the system which is most in unison with the general good. Nor for the preference which she is openly to give to one, and for the consequent condemnation, which, in a certain sense, she may thus be said to pass upon the others, is it requisite that she should wait for the developement of the various evils to which the latter naturally lead. It is her duty, as far as possible, to guard against the actual occurrence of the danger, by giving that decided preference to the Church, which, from its principles and from its constitution, has the strongest tendency to counteract the evils to be

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temporal arm in crushing the spirit of religious freedom. But this is evidently a system that has no ground in nature, on which it can rationally demand the preference of a state that abjures all wish to come forcibly between mankind, and that homage to their Maker which is sanctioned by their conscience, however erroneous she may believe its dictates. A system which is directly hostile to all civil freedom, must be infinitely removed from everything like claim upon the preference of a state, of which the leading and essential aim, is to give every latitude to individual liberty, compatible with a regard to general order.

But in judging of the grounds on which, in opposition to the Church, the members of the other body can, in behalf of the religious system it adopts, either ask for the decided preference of the state, or even for an equal participation in her favour, still can we find none by which they are supported, none which do not go to negative its claims. That system which leaves out of consideration certain of the natural orders of society ; a system which adapts its views and its provisions to a fictitious state of things, where it presup-

poses an equality that cannot permanently exist, can possess no claim upon the preference of a state that takes those orders all into account, and seeks the welfare of the various classes, in the proper adjustment of their mutual relations. But in every instance, in which the others fail of shewing any grounds on which the state could rationally adopt their system, as the one in which she could place confidence for co-operating in the fulfilment of the objects in her view, in our previous observations we have found ample proof, that the system of that church on whom her approbation has been actually bestowed, has been preferred on grounds that could not justify a moment's hesitation. In hers we have a system which recommends itself to the attention and the preference of the state, by seconding her views in every point where the influence of religion can be found of use, in carrying into effect their beneficial operation.

In making Christianity a reasonable service, so far as consists in making the reception of its doctrines and the fulfilment of its precepts, a matter not of blind but rational obedience, the Church has seconded the intentions of the state in seek-

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But narrowing the question as we are required to do, let our view be limited to that aspect of the subject which would leave the eligibility of making the concessions that have been demanded of the state, to be determined by the influence of their peculiar dogmas, on those who have an interest in the affirmative decision. When we look minutely to their feelings and their conduct, do we find these indicative of the perfect safety, either to our civil or ecclesiastical constitution, that could vindicate the policy of investing them with the powers, which, if they shall feel the inclination, they must possess the opportunity, of turning against both.

In judging of the danger, by the actual conduct of the members of these religious bodies, we most willingly admit, that in the case of one, all intentional injury to the interests of the state must be considered as precluded, by their attachment to the principles of civil freedom. But there is danger, still most clearly recognised, in the extreme facility with which they identify their views, with those false conceptions of the nature and tendency of the Christian system, which lead them

in the first place to evince hostility to the habits and pursuits that are essential to its existence, and thus virtually lay foundation for eventually subverting, that organization of society, on which church and state have moulded their provisions.

But if we are to judge of it, by the feelings they evince, and by the conduct they pursue, the danger to be apprehended from yielding up those points, of which possession is disputed with the members of the Church, comes under an infinitely more alarming form, if we should conceive them to be surrendered to the members of that body, which, with its supporters, is the most loud and urgent in demanding the concession.

The danger is apparent in the conduct of those who claim the right to be the only organs through which the state is to communicate with their body, upon every point which they may choose to construe, into one that has affinity to the subject of religion. In the exercise of this right, we find them sedulously endeavouring to prevent her from imparting to any who are subject to their authority, those elements of general knowledge which might favourably influence the tenets they

profess, as actuating principles of general conduct. In the exercise of this right, we find them resorting anxiously to every means which may enable them to retain the rest of their communion, in that mental darkness which renders them incapable of distinguishing the fulness of the allegiance which they owe her. But let us suppose, that from their conduct, we have reason to believe that the principles of those from whom the others are to imbibe the feelings they are to cherish, and to take the bias of the conduct they are to pursue, towards the state, had actually passed through that process of refinement, which, by themselves and by their advocates, we are assured that they have done. Let us suppose, that in their conduct, we could see an actual proof that they were now sincerely, zealously, employed in mitigating, as to its effects upon the minds of others, the naturally unfavourable influence of their creed. Have they any security which they can give the state, that she is always to meet its influence, under this ameliorated and mitigated form? Can they give to her a pledge, that the religious principles of their body, in so far as they

may affect her interests, shall be at all times such as they at present are declared to be? Is there any recorded and abiding standard of their faith to which they can refer, and by which the members of their communion may be at all times bound, to that modified representation of the principles they profess, which they now appeal to as justification of the confidence they ask? This is a standard they have not to shew; this is a pledge which they have not to give. On the contrary, it is of the very essence of their faith, that as to many questions most essentially connected with the welfare of the state, under no combination of circumstances which we can presuppose, is it possible to determine what shall be the conduct its adherents are to pursue. The extension and supremacy of their Church is the object which takes precedence of every other; to be sought by every means which they may believe they can be justified in employing. But what are to constitute those justifiable means, is a question to be determined, neither by the natural principles of justice, nor directly by a reference to scripture, nor by any certain exposition of the views of

scripture. It is a question of which the solution may vary with the will of every individual who may chance to fill that office, which, according to the principles of their creed, gives him a right to silence the dictates of their reason and their conscience; that gives him an authority by which he is entitled to supersede the mandates of the word of God. As owning a faith of this uncertain and elusive nature, it is evident that its adherents can be hereafter, bound by no exposition of its dictates which they who hold it may at present give. As giving up their right of judgment to those, who, for the bias which they give their conduct, are in no way amenable to the authority of the state;—to those who are necessarily under the influence of governments which are on various grounds inimical to us;—to those who in every practicable instance have directed their authority to the establishment and support of arbitrary power, it is evident that the adherents of that faith must always remain a body incapable of amalgamating with the rest of the community. They must, for the reasons stated, always remain a body incapable of being impressed with some of our most

striking characteristics as a people; incapable of being assimilated and identified as to interests and feelings.

Until we find a country in which the Romish is the established and predominating faith, where we see not merely the elements of civil freedom, appearing under a doubtful and precarious form, struggling for existence with the noxious influence of its peculiar dogmas; but, where, with all the institutions that are essential to its subsistence, we see the principles of liberty appreciated fully by the community at large, and cherished and supported by their spiritual guides, it were a stretch of charity unwarranted by reason, as it is unwarranted by experience, to believe it possible that they can coexist. Until this shall have been seen, it were rashness, and not charity, to think it possible for the Roman church to have her hands unshackled, without employing them for the subversion at once of religious and of civil freedom. It were the height of rashness until this shall have been seen, that they who owe her fealty should be placed in those positions, should be intrusted with that power, which go virtually to invest them with the guardianship of ours.

To speak, as is so often done, of the hardship of subjecting to civil disabilities for religious scruples, is but a further proof of that slight consideration which the subject has received from those who are heard to advocate their cause, without having a personal interest in the affirmative result. Of all who may be personally interested in this, it may be asserted with equal, and with perfect truth, that the more they are sincere, that the more they are conscientious, in the scruples they allege, the greater is the danger of conceding what they ask.

In a case in which are implicated the essential interests of every individual as of every class, a principle of selfishness may operate with those who own no other principle of action, who would trample on the dictates of morality and religion, in leading them to support, what otherwise it were the height of their ambition to overthrow. But in mistaken conscience there is an actuating principle, under the influence of which, men are amenable to no control. In that delusion under which they labour, they are then incapable of looking beyond the aggrandizement of their church or sect; or through the impulse of the feeling to

which their judgment is surrendered, they make a merit of the sacrifice of every interest, which they are led to think is in the way of its attainment. Of all, therefore, who may be free from the delusion, it is the duty to unite in debarring them the power, in exercising, which they are not to be guided by the dictates of sound reason ; in depriving them of the weapons, which, under the influence of this hallucination, there is a moral certainty that they would turn against the Church, and in so doing, turn against the state, against each other, and against themselves.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

IN taking leave of the subjects to which our attention has been principally devoted, it is satisfactory to reflect that a majority, which, as to respectability as well as number, so infinitely transcends the body which has from various motives been arrayed against the Church, has remained uninfluenced by the attacks of her opponents. From rigid examination and mature reflection, or from a well-grounded confidence in the result of the inquiries instituted by able and impartial men, a great and valuable majority has remained convinced, that she is in every way entitled to admiration and support. They see every reason to feel thoroughly persuaded that she is admirably adapted to our exigencies as they rise, either out of the circumstances that are common to our nature, or from those, which, as a nation, are peculiarly our own. Looking to them as means

adapted to the accomplishment of certain ends, in the importance of the latter, and in the fulness of the success with which they are attended, they see the futility of the charges which have been brought forward against certain of her attributes, by those who are incapable of more extended views. That, they are well aware, cannot be considered as too dearly bought, which, being paramount in itself, is obtained at the only price at which it can be purchased. Of these who are thus capable of viewing the subject in its proper light, there may be some, not indisposed to think that her cause should be trusted to its innate strength. Looking to the general description of her enemies, they may think that silence is the only shield with which it is befitting to repel their accusations.

But feeble as are the hands which have been intentionally raised against her, and pointless as are the weapons they employ, circumstances may be found, to lend the former an adventitious strength, to give the last an impulse that may be deeply felt. It is not that there is danger to be justly apprehended, individually, from those who are

wishing to destroy her power ; that, in seeking to mislead the public mind, there is anything to be dreaded from the intrinsic force of any of the arguments they can legitimately use. But, as we have already seen, the danger lies in this, that interest and prejudice give a tendency to many, amounting almost to a wish to be misled. Through their influence it has happened, that arguments have been admitted, as conclusive on this subject, which would have been rejected as futile and unworthy of attention, had they reference to cases in which prejudice were silent, interest unconcerned.

But while circumstances have thus fortuitously combined to favour their designs, and others may arise, at present unforeseen, equally facilitating their efforts to mislead, it is evident that the attacks of her calumniators should be met, with more than the silent disapprobation of her friends. Men may have their attention so long, and so assiduously drawn away from truth, that they may at last be unable to recognise her form. They may at last be strangers to her voice, where it has long been drowned amid the clamours of prejudice and interested malice.

But there is another consideration which makes it incumbent on the friends of church and state to be neither silent nor inactive, either at the present or at any future time. Truths may be forgotten where they are not controverted ; and in respect to that, by which church and state stand equally affected, this may be exemplified with many, by whom the efforts of their enemies pass totally unheeded.

In the history of the world we stand apart from all. In every feature and in every circumstance, there is something by which we are favourably distinguished, widely separated, from other nations. As the most striking of the proofs of the superiority we enjoy, it has been usual to refer to the unshaken firmness wherewith we have withstood those shocks, by which our power has been externally assailed. But if anything could place our superiority in a clearer light, could evince more fully the comparative extent and depth of our resources, it is the suddenness and the force with which we have not merely recovered the position we had lost, but invariably overpast our former limits, whenever from accidental causes,

as to certain of its bearings on individual interests, the spring of our prosperity has been temporarily repressed. But looking towards it as it has shown itself by these, looking to the innumerable modes in which our national superiority is otherwise displayed, there are many who appear to be impressed with the conviction, that for this, we are indebted to some peculiar exemption from the laws which regulate the ordinary course of human things. They seem to think that we are to be favoured with an unlimited operation of all by which the interests of our nature are beneficially affected; that in our behalf have been suspended all, by which those interests may be permanently injured. Comparing our situation with that of other countries, in the elation which they naturally feel, at a contrast so uniformly advantageous to ourselves, they never call to mind that a time has been, when this was a contrast far less strongly marked; that the time may yet arrive when the result of the comparison shall be utterly reversed. They revolve not the possibility of circumstances occurring, to bring us below the level of the countries, which, as com-

pared with ours, are at present most disadvantageously and most dissimilarly placed.

As connected, therefore, with a subject which so many things concur, either to obscure or to exclude from view, it cannot be too earnestly, too frequently, inculcated, that it is only the materials of our fortunes which are placed within our reach ; that we are the artificers and must shape them for ourselves. It is on this consideration that the present efforts have not been withheld, and whatever imperfection may be ascribed to the mode in which the argument has been conducted, nothing, we are persuaded, can invalidate the conclusions at which we have arrived. Whatever be the way by which they shall be reached, there are certain points, where, we cannot but feel persuaded, we shall be met by all who approach the subject with unbiased minds. They who give it the attention which it merits, will find everything concurring to establish that conclusion, which would consider our general circumstances and position as a people to be immediately dependent, on the characteristic principles of the national religion. Had these been different from what

they are, they must perceive that our country never could have reached that proud pre-eminence she at present holds, as the undoubted head of the political, the intellectual, and the moral world. But from this, we pass by necessary consequence, to that which would support the further proposition, that on the preservation of the peculiar features of our religious character must it essentially depend, whether we are to be enabled to retain our fortunes at their present height. It follows from the other, that on this it must depend, whether we are to fulfil that higher destiny which is courting our advance; or, pointing the moral of some future page, by the contrast of our present with our after fortunes, to give a deeper intonation than it has yet received, to that voice of solemn, almost of prophetic, warning, with which history has heretofore proclaimed the utter mutability of earthly greatness.

But again, would we most earnestly repeat, still confidently appealing to the candid for support, that from that asylum which genuine Christianity has so long received among us, with the graces, and the virtues, and the temporal advantages

which follow in her train, there is a moral impossibility that she can ever be ejected, with common caution and with common prudence, to maintain the wise provisions of the Church. If these shall be maintained, against the united force of infidelity and fanaticism, the Church, and Christianity in her, is equally secure. Having no weak unnecessary points to guard, no structure of fraud or superstition to maintain, with reason and scripture both upon her side, it is morally impossible that any weapon which is formed against her shall be ever found to prosper, unless we prepare its way, by unnerving the arm, or depressing the courage, or corrupting the integrity, of those who are to man the bulwarks of her faith.

Happily for us, happily for the interests of humanity at large, consistently with the preservation of the means through which she seeks to guard against it, of all the events which in their nature are contingent, there is none so remote from probable, so nearly within the limits of impossible, occurrence, as danger to the interests of virtue and religion, through those to whom the Church has trusted their defence. Of all events which

not being fixed by absolute necessity, it may be considered within the bounds of possibility to shun, there is none, of which, with greater certainty we may venture to predict, that nothing unforeseen can happen to avert it, than that all the evils which are to be apprehended from this cause, must follow any change on the precautionary measures which the Church adopts. By withdrawing its defenders from the points it is essential they should strictly watch; by depriving them of the most powerful of the weapons they could use in her defence; by impairing the moral strength and sinking the moral courage, through which alone any that might remain to them could be successfully employed; and last and worst, by leaving their fidelity to be assaulted by temptations beyond what human virtue can resist, a change upon the salutary arrangements of the Church, must be considered as unavoidably synonymous with the destruction of all the interests she protects; with the destruction of every safe guard of religion, and with the consequent irruption of the evils that are incident, though not essential, to the prosperity of nations.

None, we are persuaded, who approach the subject with unprejudiced attention, can leave its consideration without the firm conviction, that there can be no permanent separation betwixt the good of the Church, and the safety, honour, and welfare of our Sovereign and his dominions. If we would have all things so ordered and settled, upon the best and surest foundations, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us, for all generations, none, we are persuaded, who, in entering on the question, have freed their minds from every undue bias, can hesitate to admit our general conclusion, that the most effectual, that the only means, is to maintain that Church as she at present stands, as founded on Scripture, as supported by reason, as by law established; unchanged in her principles, unaltered in her forms, with privileges undiminished, and uninjured in her rights.

THE END.

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